

THE IDEOLOGICAL USES OF THE PAST

ALISTAIR GRIMES

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Department of Politics
University of Edinburgh

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I declare that this thesis is my own
work.

ABSTRACT

The thesis is divided into four parts. Each part deals with one aspect of ideological thought.

The first part attempts to define the area for study by indicating how the terms ideology and ideological will be understood, and some reasons for dissatisfaction with previous attempts to define the term. It then considers the objection that any attempt to examine the concept of ideology must itself be a rival ideological version of events. This objection is examined by contrasting philosophy as an activity with ideology and offering reasons for holding that they are a) different activities b) philosophy does not underpin a particular ideological model. Thus, it is possible to offer a disinterested study of our subject.

The second part examines the relationship between history and ideology. It attempts to show that history is an autonomous enterprise and that it offers a special and particular understanding of the past. In contrast, it is suggested that there are other ways of understanding the past (of which ideology may be one) but that we can distinguish between them and the historical understanding of the past by looking at the appropriate context.

The third part looks at three particular ideologies - Marxism, Liberalism, and Conservatism. It attempts to illustrate the part played by the past in these ideologies and to thus make concrete the argument of part II that ideologists are interested in the past, but not in history. The argument looks at the relationship between the past and the other aspects of each ideology, for example, the view of human nature, of political activity and of social change. It is suggested that the important feature of the past for ideologists is the practical information

it can provide, rather than the knowledge it can generate at a theoretical level. The vision of the past which Marxists, Liberals and Conservatives have is determined by these other elements, such that even if we wanted to, examining the Marxists view of the past, as history, would be to distort it.

Having contrasted ideological understanding of the past with an 'academic' understanding in the shape of history, part four looks at the relationship between ideology and religion. The purpose here is to see whether understandings of the past which are not academic (they are termed 'practical' here) are of the same type. The conclusion is that there are as many differences between two 'practical' entities such as ideology and religion, as there are between ideology and 'academic' disciplines. Thus the 'shape' of ideology is thrown into relief from two sides, that of 'academic disciplines' and that of 'practical activity'. The fourth part continues by raising the question of disagreements between ideologists and poses some questions about their capacity for resolution. It is argued that disputes between ideologists are not like disputes or arguments between scientists or philosophers, because they lack appropriate criteria. A more illuminating parallel, it is claimed, is with moral disagreements, where fundamental values rather than 'facts' are at stake.

The thesis seeks, by looking at how ideologists understand the past, and by relating that understanding to the other aspects of ideological thought to try and make clear the status of ideologies in relation to other areas of thought. It concludes that though ideologies do not offer us an objective or theoretically illuminating understanding of events, they should not be dismissed as a mere parasite on political activity. They

are closer to religion and to morality than to science, philosophy or history, without being identical to them. Thus, to dismiss them as if they were the poor relations of academic enquiry may be to misunderstand them.

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CHAPTER ONE

The study of ideological thought does not present the potential investigator with an obvious path to pursue. Indeed, it may well be the case that the investigation of ideological thought can be carried on profitably within several disciplines. For example, it might be suggested that philosophers, historians and sociologists all have an interest here. Philosophy might be conceived as being interested in the concept of ideology, history in the chronological development of the term, or in the development of particular ideologies, and sociology in explaining why various social groupings hold certain ideological positions. It would clearly be an enormous undertaking to assess the relative merits of each possible approach, but this task is, fortunately, something that we do not need to take up here. Rather, what we need to do is note the limits of each type of investigation and select the appropriate discipline for the kind of investigation we wish to pursue.

Because the concerns of this thesis are conceptual in character we are committed to the methods and standards of philosophical inquiry. It may be worthwhile, therefore, at the outset, to indicate something of the manner in which philosophy is understood as an activity here. This will help provide the background for a later part of the discussion in this chapter on the distinction between ideology and philosophy and it may, indirectly, help to show why philosophy does not need to be supplemented here by the findings of history or sociology. Philosophers do, of course, disagree about the nature of their own subject and a particular view of philosophical inquiry might not be expected to gain universal approval. The point, however, is not to engage in the rather large task of defining a

view of philosophy and defending it against all possible objections but to delineate those features necessary for the rest of this inquiry to proceed and, in particular, to put forward acceptable reasons (based upon those features) for rejecting the charge that we are merely offering an alternative ideological vision to those under scrutiny.

Though most people would find it easy to agree that Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, G E Moore and Wittgenstein were all philosophers they might not find it so easy to agree on what the above were doing when they did philosophy. In a well known paper on this very topic,¹ Freidrich Waismann wrote how difficult it was to set out a series of formal distinctions that would define philosophy and instead gave examples of 'typical' philosophical arguments such as the reductio ad absurdum or the location of an infinite regress. Though it can be legitimately suggested that there is a lot more to philosophy than arguments (in Waismann's sense), Waismann is surely correct to suggest that the distinguishing marks of philosophy are to be found in its methods rather than in its subject matter. The scientist, historian, theologian and philosopher might all be said to attempt to understand the world, but they do so in different ways. Some examples might make this clearer. An historian might be interested in resolving the question of whether or not the battle of Mons Grampius was fought in Somerset or near Aberdeen, and the investigation of this question would call for documents, archaeological evidence, clues in the liter-

¹ F Waismann, How I see philosophy, ed. R Harre (London; Macmillan, 1968)

ature or folklore of the time and so on. As more information becomes available, one interpretation may appear to be more plausible than others. The philosopher, on the other hand, is interested in a different order of question - "Is the past knowable at all ?"

Sceptical doubt on this matter would not be resolved by the production of more factual evidence, since a sceptic's doubts would cover all evidence. Again, the physiologist might be interested in how certain nerves transmit signals to the brain when heat is applied to the skin, and whether or not such impulses can be measured by sophisticated instruments. The philosopher is interested in the question, "Can we ever know that another person is in pain ?" It is clear that the philosopher does not require evidence in the sense that the historian or scientist do, but needs to examine (in the examples above) our concept of knowing. What, in other words, is involved in the claim to know that an event happened in the past or that X has a toothache ?

In this sense, philosophy investigates the presuppositions of judgements rather than their factual or empirical content.

This may give the impression that philosophical questions arise only out of non-philosophical activities such as science or history. The philosopher is seen as someone whose activities are parasitic upon other forms of learning. It is true that philosophy is involved in reminding us of the limits of, say, science or theology and in criticising attempts to push claims beyond their appropriate logical limits, but it is equally important to note that the general questions mentioned above may equally be said to arise from general epistemological questions that have always been central to philosophical inquiry. In this sense philosophy is not parasitic upon other activities, it is

an attempt to elucidate the nature of the world in a certain way (and that investigation may involve looking at claims, or what is involved in making claims, in history, science or theology). On this view, philosophy would be concerned to look at the form rather than the content of ideological thought; or in other words, to examine the kind of claims ideologists are making.

At this point someone might reasonably object that philosophy appears to be concerned with the question of meaning to the exclusion of questions of truth. We surely want to know more than the type of claim the ideologist or religious believer is making, we want to know if they are true: not, perhaps in the sense of factually true, but in the sense of coherent or rational. After all, it might be said, a great many absurd beliefs are entertained by large numbers of people; surely it is failing in our duty as philosophers if we neglect to criticise as well as elucidate these various beliefs and doctrines, and surely it is carrying kindness too far to give them equal epistemological status. Such an objection is, however, based upon a misconception. To talk of truth is to talk of appropriate and agreed criteria for settling a question. Thus two scientists with opposing views would be bound by the results of a properly conducted experiment, two theologians would be bound by a sacred text and two historians would be bound by the production of appropriate evidence. It is clear that within science, theology or history we can speak of truth or falsity since there are accepted standards, which can be appealed to. The difficulty comes when we try and ask in general is science, or religion, true or false? What is to be the standard here?

It may make matters clearer to go back for a moment to the question of meaning. A religious claim, such as 'God made the world', may look logically akin to a statement such as 'Chippendale made that chair', but may in fact be of a different type altogether, since we would not imagine that it could be verified by anything like the same methods. Thus, a closer look at the meaning of a statement may help us to avoid a category mistake in which we use the criteria of one area to judge a matter that belongs to another. It would be as if we judged how good cricketer X was by how many goals he scored. This does not mean that all statements that purport to be religious are automatically exempt from criticism of any sort. Some claims made by believers do appear to be cast in the form that would subject them to scientific criteria, and in that case they would have to meet those standards. My point is that they need not be so, and although this may preclude them from making claims of a certain sort, it also gives them exemption from a certain sort of criticism as well. Further, the standards of theology or science are not invented by philosophers but arise out of, and are intelligible within, the activities of religion or science itself.²

This may seem like a mere appeal to accepted conventions. If anything can be shown to have a social basis then it becomes exempt from external criticism. This, however, is not my position, for I am only arguing against the kind of inappropriate criticism which systematically misunderstands the type of claims that are being made.

² For a fuller discussion see P. Winch, The idea of a social science: and its relation to philosophy (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958)

It may, however, be worth touching briefly on the issue of conventionalism. In the writings of some philosophers (The Protagorus for example) this is taken to mean the acceptance of the majority view ("Man is the measure of all things"). There is a different sense in which we can understand the term, namely that humans do not make judgements in a void, they are made within a way of life in which certain ways of thinking are familiar. Wittgenstein discusses this issue and raises the objection "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false ?" to which he replies "It is what human beings say that is true or false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in a form of life".³ This does not mean that people are free to make any kind of judgements they like, or to 'invent' a form of life that pleases them. It would be absurd, for example, to deny that the physical world imposes certain constraints upon us, or to deny that conventions can and do change (often quite radically) over time. My point is that it is only because certain conventional standards are accepted as taken for granted that any questions of truth and falsity can be decided at all even if, over time, those conventions are abandoned for others. This does not, as our objector might imagine, let anyone off the hook, for the assessment of what is involved in a 'form of life' does not exclude the possibility of criticising judgements, either for failing to conform to those internal standards (for example, a scientist produces an hypothesis that is unfalsifiable by evidence) or for overstepping the logical limits of that activity (for example,

³ L Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1953), para 241.

the psychologist who wants to reduce all human behaviour to talk of causes⁴). What it does exclude is the elevation of one way of looking at the world over all others, unless we can show that all these other various forms of thought and intellectual activities are really attempts to do or say the same thing as that one way in a more or less successful manner. Thus whilst one might not doubt that if the Azande want to grow more crops per square yard they would be best advised to use fertiliser and not sacrifice a chicken, what one can doubt is whether the action of sacrificing a chicken before planting crops must be understood as an attempt to achieve the same effect as a liberal dose of John Innes potting compost.

The more general point that is being expressed here may thus be elucidated in terms of understanding the relationship between nature and convention. Because we inherit a system of thought and of concepts, our view of nature is formed through them. We can only express views from within a conceptual scheme and that scheme is presupposed whilst we make judgements of a certain sort. This does not mean that such conceptual schemes have nothing to do with nature, for they are clearly modified in the light of experience and their adequacy in helping solve the problems they are addressing themselves to. Thus science supercedes alchemy because it provides a superior framework for understanding and manipulating physical processes. The survival of 'forms of life' and their development or refinement over time is, then, at least partly due to their ability to deal with "the facts of nature" and to work in terms of what it is they are trying to

⁴ I am assuming here, for the sake of the argument, that such a view is false.

do.⁵ They survive because they enable us to do, say, or express something of importance. What I have been trying to suggest here is that the task of elucidating the logic of various activities does not preclude the philosopher from being critical (cf Wittgenstein and psychology) but that qua philosopher he or she can no more change the rules of an activity such as science than the scientist can change the laws of nature. Wittgenstein put the matter in the following way:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language. It can, in the end, only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is. ⁶

Later on he described philosophy as a kind of therapy for various disorders of the understanding. This view appears to be susceptible to a knock down argument which demonstrates that philosophical enlightenment is not like being cured of an illness; for in the latter case we are restored to a former state of health, but in the case of philosophical understanding we are not restored to a previous state but have achieved greater clarity which has dispelled our previous problems. Philosophy has, in short, changed something. It is not my aim to deny that philosophy would, in the case above, have made a difference. The question is "What kind of difference?" For example, to use an illustration mentioned earlier, if psychology is a barren science then the psychologist who comes to see this through deeper philosophical understanding may legitimately claim that things

⁵ But we should note as E E Evans-Pritchard did, that the Zande grew crops, and made objects perfectly adequately. Magic did not conflict with this activity.

⁶ Wittgenstein, op cit, para 124

are different and that it is impossible to continue as before. This may be so, though it is important to note that what has changed here is the psychologists understanding of that enterprise, rather than the status of the enterprise itself. Philosophy has helped us to see more clearly what was already there, and seeing that may make it impossible to sustain certain claims. It does not, of course, follow that such activities are therefore worthless, merely that they are not what they seem or claim to be, and it may be possible to continue with the activity under discussion in a different direction. Thus, to take the case of ideologies, it may well be that they cannot sustain claims to objectivity, and philosophy may show this. The ideologist may, however, continue with his political activities having accepted that they do not have the foundations he thought, or on the other hand give them up because he considers them to be based upon subjective assessment rather than objective knowledge. Philosophy cannot guarantee either response, or say which one would be right here. A second kind of objection to the view of philosophy I have been outlining is that it is insufficiently historical. It treats philosophical debates as if they were all taking place now, and treats Descartes and Aristotle as if they were members of an Oxford college. David Miller, in the opening pages of his book 'Social Justice'⁷ argues that such terms as justice and fairness change in meaning over time and that we cannot, therefore, assume that all the various philosophers who have used the term are contributing in a more or less satisfactory or coherent

⁷ D Miller, Social Justice (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1979)

way to the same debate. An extreme version of this thesis is put forward by Quentin Skinner⁸ who argues that there simply are no perennial problems in philosophy. On this view, before we can get to grips with the arguments of Descartes or Aristotle we need to engage in some preliminary historical research as a necessary supplement to philosophy. In the context of the philosophical investigation of ideological thought it might be argued that we need to start with a preliminary historical inquiry into previous uses of the term. It is certainly true that as an activity, philosophy has a history, and also that certain terms have changed their meaning over time. But these admissions need not lead to the conclusions that Miller and Skinner advance. Though Aristotle was a Greek and Hegel a German, their philosophical reflections were not intended to give an account of Greek or German institutions or mores during a particular epoch. Miller, who argues that 'linguistic' philosophy is parochial because it only looks at 'our' notions of democracy or freedom, undermines his own arguments a few pages further on, when he talks about the three or four major models of society that will find defenders in each generation or epoch.⁹ In this he is surely correct, for the argument over whether sovereignty can only be exercised by virtue of a contract between a ruler and people is one which can recur in a whole host of political circumstances and over a number of years. In this sense, historical examples which philosophers may advance are not there as factual points but as reminders that what is actual is also logically possible. It is worth noting that when philosophers such as Aristotle did discuss

⁸ Q Skinner, Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas, History and Theory, Vol 8 (1969), 1-54

⁹ Miller, *op cit*, 12-13

the notion of duty or obedience they did so, not in terms of the polis but in much more general terms, for example through the dilemma that might face a captain at sea. Miller, by devoting part of his book to looking at the claims of Hume and Kropotkin, seems to implicitly accept that they are both contributions to the philosophical question of justice, even though they are separated by many years and wrote in different 'problem situations'. The test of the answers they give cannot be that they have adequately described the political or moral institutions of their time, but that the account they have given of justice either gives, or fails to give an adequate exposition to the conditions that would need to pertain if we were to be able to speak of justice at all. That is, it must encompass all talk of justice and not just a particular use. Thus our criticisms are along the lines that X's account is inconsistent, contradictory or fails to give account of a viable alternative, not that the Athenian constitution has been misquoted.

Skinner, on the other hand, makes his claims in the course of more general reflections on the nature of the history of ideas and on the relationship between an adequate philosophical theory and good intellectual history. Much of this need not concern us here. The claim that is worth investigating from our point of view is that there are no perennial questions which the 'great books' of political philosophy seek to answer. The persistence of the term justice, for example, says nothing about the persistence of the question to which it might have been used to answer.¹⁰ Skinner has several sceptical

¹⁰ Skinner, op cit, 39

arguments about traditional solutions to the question of how we come to understand the works of great philosophers in the past, be it that of poring over the text or of looking at the general historical context in which such works were written. In the end he concludes that we not only need to understand what was said but also to grasp what he terms (following Professor Austin) the illocutory force.¹¹ According to Skinner understanding a text is equivalent to recovering a complex intention on the part of the author, the social context being part of this linguistic enterprise.¹² There are clear analogies with the work of Collingwood here. He concludes by arguing that any statement is the embodiment of a particular intention addressed to a particular question, hence the lack of perennial problems.

In general one would want to agree with a lot of the negative conclusions advanced by Skinner. In particular, he is quite correct to stress the dangers of attempting to foist 'doctrines' on writers by 'adding up' various scattered parts of their works and pretending that they are contributions to a single problem. He is also correct to preach on the dangers of looking 'behind' the works of various authors and constructing the history of (literally) ideas that 'anticipate' future developments or conflict with each other at some abstract level ("Evolution versus the Great Chain of Being", "science versus religion" and so on). Indeed, one might go on here and suggest that Skinner does not press some of his claims as far as he could, with interesting, if negative, implications for that whole enterprise "The History of

¹¹ See his 'How to do things with words' (Oxford: Oxford Uni.Pr., 1962)

¹² Op cit, 49

Ideas'.¹³

However, in terms of his discussion of philosophy and its history, there is less to be said for Skinner's approach. Consider the question "Can a good man be harmed?" and the discussion of that question in 'The Gorgias' where we were invited to look at the tyrant who triumphs according to the standards of the world by lying, cheating, torturing and killing to achieve power and the 'lover of good' (as Kierkegaard might put it) who suffers the horrors of punishment for the sake of a moral principle. Though there would be many points of difference between Greek moral standards and our own (slavery, the position of women and so on) this would not inhibit us from discussing the philosophical thesis at issue here (namely, does moral 'good' reside in the nature of actions irrespective of the consequences, or is it only contingently related to our actions and in that sense dependent upon the consequences). It is difficult to see how Skinner could object to the modern Utilitarian who seeks to show that the Socratic view of morality is confused, or the modern philosopher who wants to revive and defend what Socrates says. To be sure, the circumstances of the debate are different, and different things may hang on the outcome, but it would still be difficult to uphold the view that the question "Can a good man be harmed?" is, in the Gorgias, a particular question for Athenians of that era. The defender of the Socratic view is after all, seeking to show that the Utilitarian has in a general sense failed to grasp the distinction between moral good and practical gain.

¹³ That is to say, though ideas may form part of the history of, say, the Bolshevik rising or the Cuban revolution, they cannot be 'abstracted' from those events and linked together merely as ideas and then put in chronological sequence.

Skinner goes some way to admitting this when, towards the end of his essay he concedes that there may be timeless questions, if not timeless answers.¹⁴ There is some confusion in Skinner's thought here, for it would seem to be a reasonable response that questions and answers are logically related, such that if the questions are the same, then so may be the answers. What Skinner might have in mind is the fact that some questions can allow for several (equally) logically viable answers (which may or may not be mutually exclusive). But this is a different matter.

A more general criticism of Skinner's approach here is that he has conflated two ways in which we can look at the past writings of philosophers. Just because a book was written 300 years ago does not mean that we must look at it historically, any more than the fact that Poussin lived 300 years ago means that our aesthetic judgement of his paintings must be historical. The point being made is that as an historian of ideas Skinner may be interested in why Machiavelli wrote 'The Prince', who was being attacked in it, where the ideas were developed from and so on. And Skinner writes very eloquently on the dangers and difficulties that are involved in this kind of reconstruction. The context here is quite clearly that of the past understood historically and involving questions such as who, why, what, and where? On the other hand, a philosopher may not be interested in that kind of question at all. He or she may be interested purely in the validity of a certain argument, or in seeing whether an argument of a certain form helps solve a related difficulty (as Skinner himself uses Austin's distinction) rather than understanding what Machiavelli intended to do.

¹⁴ Op cit, 52

There is nothing wrong with either activity, they are merely different; and problems in the interpretation of the former do not necessarily make philosophy more difficult. Indeed, discovering Machiavelli's intention would be an end in itself for the historian of ideas, but it would not even be a starting point for philosophy, for philosophy is not about reconstructing the arguments of other people, it is about criticising arguments in the appropriate manner. The arguments can be based upon the works of other, or imaginary, people. What matters is that the criticisms are valid. I am suggesting that the works of Machiavelli are, for philosophers, not the repository of certain arguments that need to be accurately reconstructed, but a stimulus to the philosophical imagination. Thus it may be the case that Skinner (or someone else) comes up with an interpretation of Machiavelli which seems to shed light on a range of philosophical problems which vex us. Surely the philosophical enlightenment that has been achieved would still be there even if subsequent research were to show that Skinner's interpretation was completely incorrect? In short, good philosophy is not dependent upon good history.

I will return to the nature of philosophy as an activity at a later stage when its relationship with ideology is being discussed at greater length.

The second step which needs to be taken at this point is to consider in more detail how we are to understand the nature of ideological thought in this thesis. As we have already noted, one suggested approach is to look back at the various uses of ideology and to list them and outline them in a more or less comprehensive way. This is the approach used by John Plamenatz in his book 'Ideology'¹⁵ and by Henry

¹⁵ J Plamenatz, Ideology (London: Macmillan, 1971).

Drucker in 'The Political Uses of Ideology'.¹⁶ Both Plamenatz and Drucker point out the origin of the term in the works of Destutt de Tracy, the way in which Napoleon gave the term a derogatory meaning and how Marx used the term in a pejorative sense to account for what he saw as certain features of bourgeois thought. Mannheim took up Marx's use and applied it to Marxism itself. This would leave us in a state of some confusion, since we could go on from here and list many more uses of the term ideological which have entered into our political vocabulary since Mannheim's day and still be little the wiser about the nature of the concept we are investigating. There is, after all, more to philosophy than compiling a dictionary. Since Marx in particular has been responsible for much current usage of the term, we need to examine his view of ideology: not as an historical exercise, but to see if his account is indeed coherent. If it is then the matter is solved. If, on the other hand, it is not, then we need to sketch out an alternative that will make sense of the term without suffering the twin dangers of vacuity or over-restriction. In particular we need to make sure that our understanding of ideology makes sense of the practice of politics. Marx's views on ideology are scattered throughout his writings, and we are always at risk of falling into the Skinnerian trap of 'prolepsis' if we attempt to reconstruct a 'doctrine'. However, it is in order to relate several features of Marx's view which can be discussed. For Marx, unlike de Tracy, ideology is something to be contrasted with 'science'. It has two main features. Firstly it is connected

¹⁶ H M Drucker, The Political Uses of Ideology (London; Macmillan, 1974)

with what Marx called 'false consciousness', where the bourgeois or proletarian who is in the grip of ideology has a mistaken perception of how the world 'really' is. In this sense, the bourgeois notion of the state is ideological and needs to be unmasked. A Marxist cannot have an ideology, thus understood, since Marxist science has revealed how things 'really' are. Secondly, ideology is something that justifies a particular class position by producing an apologia for it. Thus, during various historical epochs there will be different justifications for the ruling class of the day (the Divine Right of Kings in 17th century). Such deception will not be needed in the proletarian state, and again, in this sense the Marxist claims not to have an ideology. There is a related sense in which an ideology might be understood (as in Lenin) as underpinning a political position, and in this sense the proletariat does have an ideology - that of scientific socialism. This broad view has recently been defended by David Miller in an article entitled "Ideology and false consciousness"¹⁷. The introduction of Miller here is not intended as that of a 'typical' Marxist. Rather, he offers a view which is a clear exposition of arguments that are to be found, and referred to, in the works of Marxists. Thus, though Marx may not have used the term of 'false consciousness', the concept is, I believe, quite applicable in this context as a feature of the Marxist view of ideology.¹⁸ For example, in the 'German Ideology', Marx wrote:

This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (ie Civil Society in its various stages) as the basis of all history; and to show it in action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc, etc, and trace their origins and growth from that basis: by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in its totality (and therefore too the reciprocal

¹⁷ D Miller, Ideology and False Consciousness, Political Studies XX, No 4, 1972

¹⁸ K Marx and F Engels, The German Ideology, Ed C J Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), 58-60

actions of the various sides on one another) ...

In the whole conception of history up to the present this real basis of history has either been totally neglected or else considered as a minor matter quite irrelevant to the course of history. History must therefore always be written according to an extraneous standard; the real production of life seems to be primeval history, while the truly historical appears to be separated from ordinary life as something extra-superterrestrial ... The exponents of this conception of history have consequently only been able to see in history the political actions of princes and States, religious and all sorts of theoretical struggles, and in particular in each historical epoch have had to share the illusion of that epoch. For instance, if an epoch imagines itself to be actuated by purely 'political' or 'religious' motives, although 'religion' and 'politics' are only forms of its true motives, the historian accepts this opinion.

Ideology for Miller has three salient, related features - causal origins, false consciousness and functional role. The key here is the notion of false consciousness for, implicit in Miller's argument is the assumption that if we can show certain views to be patently and demonstrably false then it is quite legitimate, indeed forced upon us, to ask about the origins of such specious nonsense and exactly whose interests the propagation of such falsehoods profits. Thus Miller is quite aware of the distinction between why someone holds a set of beliefs and their truth or falsity (there is no reductionist thesis at work here) but holds that false beliefs demand an explanation if someone ought to see that they are false but still holds onto them. Before discussing the more substantial issues at stake here it is worth noting that Miller, though he sees himself as

offering philosophical analysis of the concept of ideology, is quite prepared to admit that this analysis may be shown to be ideological by its own criteria though it is not clear whether he would regard this as a damaging philosophical criticism.

I think that all three elements of Miller's thesis have difficulties. As he admits himself, there are notorious problems associated with the base/superstructure model of society, and he admits the pertinence of some of Plamenatz's criticisms on this point. He argues, however, that we can distinguish between ideas on the economic base and ideas in the superstructure, the latter being caused (in a loose sense) by the physical aspects of production. Thus

it is possible to look for a causal relationship between the physical aspect of production and the mental aspect, between, for example, the type of agriculture with a society possesses and the social relations within which this agriculture is carried on. 19

Marx's claim is understood as being that the form of ideas and beliefs under a given mode of production is governed by the physical aspects of that production and that if a tribe changes, say, from hunting to farming, then their ideas and social structure will change as well. It is, of course, true that we can think of many instances where something like this has happened. The history of the colonisation of Africa and Latin America is full of stories of changes in economic circumstances leading to the decline in traditional values and ways of life. It might equally be pointed out that there are counter examples where changes in beliefs lead to changes in lifestyle, but the causal thesis seems beset by two fundamental difficulties.

¹⁹ Op cit, 434.

Firstly, though Miller may claim that a causal thesis can be invoked once ideas have been shown to be false, he does not see that this brings together two seemingly incompatible categories. The point is that causes and reasons do not so much compliment as exclude one another.²⁰ If views are caused then they are what they are and we cannot sensibly ask of them whether they are true or false. We might ask for the reasons why X holds a false belief, but that is a different matter.

Thus, whilst bourgeois ideas may have origins, they are not caused in Miller's sense. Secondly, if we say that X acted according to, or because of, certain beliefs (whether or not they are true) we are asserting a logical connection and not a causal one. To act in accordance with a belief is not to draw attention to a cause (the belief) and its effect (the action) but to note that holding a belief is a logical pre-requisite of acting in that way. In other words, to talk of the causation of ideas is, in this context, misleading, since belief and action do not follow on from each other, the possession of one is a condition for the intelligibility of the other.²¹

It may be true that what Marx envisages here is the fact that in any given society there will be a limited range of choices which is related in some sense to the economic state of that society. But if that is so, then it is difficult to see how Marxism itself manages to so comprehensively break the limitations that ought to be imposed upon it. The second part of Miller's argument is that the notion of 'false

²⁰ A great deal of philosophical literature exists on this very question, but it is not an issue that the background of which can be gone into here.

²¹ See D J Manning (ed), The Form of Ideology (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 9-10.

consciousness' is an essential element of ideological thought.

'False consciousness' is a notoriously slippery term, involving as it does, not only the concept of being mistaken, but being mistaken in a special kind of way. For example, the scientists who were in the grip of pre-Newtonian physics were mistaken (let us again assume this for the sake of argument) but were not in the grip of 'false consciousness'. Miller outlines several conditions that are components of 'false consciousness' including theoretical rigour and conceptual adequacy; but the problem here is how to distinguish between 'false consciousness' and merely being mistaken. If religion is a fraud, what has the believer done other than made a rather disastrous and important miscalculation about non-existent future benefits? Such a view would, in any case, presuppose that it is an obvious matter that religion or those political forms which are non-Marxist are self-evidently false. It does not seem a plausible thesis that Conservatism, Liberalism, and Nationalism are so self-evidently false that anyone who adopts them should be immediately suspected of suffering from 'false consciousness'. And again, we would have to explain why Marxism is exempt. Secondly, this view would seem to be based upon a fairly restricted notion of what constitutes rational behaviour, in the sense that an action which does not obviously promote either the material or spiritual benefit of the actor can be dismissed as irrational and an example of 'false consciousness'. There are two points to be made here. Firstly, in the case of certain types of action (for example, moral or ethical decisions), what is of benefit is determined by the beliefs that we have rather than determined by the opinions of an external observer. Thus someone like Thomas More might willingly go to the scaffold and

claim that this is not a waste, but a vindication, of his beliefs. Secondly, we can think of counter examples to the Marxist thesis where people engage in activities which may not be to their personal advantage (those duties imposed by legal or moral ties, for example) and are indeed unsuccessful or lead to disaster, but not irrational since we can understand the logic of them. Thus the soldier who dies for a cause that is lost (and he knows it to be lost) might be behaving unreasonably (or even wrongly) but not irrationally, since we can understand his action in terms such as loss of honour, respect for his dead compatriots and so on. The Spartans, for example, despised the survivors of a defeated army.

What Miller may have in mind when he discusses 'false consciousness' is something like the situation painted by D Z Phillips when discussing the closely related notion of 'self-deception'.²² Phillips gives the example of a mother who maintains that her child is musically gifted, when it is obvious to everyone else that the child has little musical talent. When confronted by arguments to this effect, the mother resorts to a series of qualifications and excuses, such as the child has a sore throat, nerves and so on. It is certainly plausible here to say we have something more than a mere mistake about a matter of fact. But it must be noted that what we do have are a series of agreed standards to which the child fails to conform - it cannot hold notes, read music, recognise tunes. It is not as if the child was a painter where its pictures broke with an accepted style, where the standard of judgement itself might be in dispute.

²² See I Dilman and D Z Phillips, Sense and Delusion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

The mother admits that these arguments count against her assertions but resorts to excuses or qualifications to explain her child's shortcomings. But the position with, say the Marxist critique of Liberalism is more closely akin to the analogy of the new painting style rather than the tone deaf child singer. That is to say, it is the standards that are not agreed upon. In the case of the mother there is nothing wrong with the standards but with her judgement, in the case of Liberals and Marxists it is the very standards that are held to be at fault.

Presumably it is the third element in Miller's argument that is intended to supplement the thesis at this stage. The scientist who holds to a false theory is unexceptional (if unfortunate) but if we could show that he gains in some material sense from the belief that his theory is true and knows that the theory is suspect then there may well be something worth investigating here. The image is that of the witch doctor withholding information about western medicines in order to preserve his position in the tribe, or the pedlar of quack medicines in the wild west who trades on the ignorance of his customers.

Applied to single instances this view is quite in order. We can think of innumerable examples of opinions conveniently held for the advancement of career, to make a profit and so on. What is not so clear is whether or not we can hold this view to an entity such as Liberalism or Roman Catholicism. To say that all Liberals, or even the whole of the 'ruling class' holds the views that it does in order to mislead the proletariat clearly rests on heroic assumptions that are unsupported by any empirical evidence. Indeed, one of the clinching arguments is that an empirical survey of such people would show them denying this thesis ! The general point to be established is that the

notion of false or corrupt motivation (as in the man such as Cardinal Wolsey, who only holds opinions in order to gain advancement with the King, and who changes them to order) is parasitic upon the notion of genuine motivation. In other words, if there were not examples of genuine religious motivation we could not accuse Wolsey of corrupting those standards. The thesis is, therefore, either susceptible to decisive empirical refutation or buys exemption at the cost of vacuity by destroying the contrast on which its sense depends.

A further difficulty arises out of making sense of Miller's claims about the function of entities such as Liberalism, as opposed to the function of an element within them. It may seem to be merely playing with words to protest that talk of the function of Liberalism implies that Liberalism was designed or invented by someone (or a group of people) in the way that the Nigerian parliament was 'designed' by British civil servants. But this is plainly not the case. Liberals may have purposes that they pursue in the political arena, but it no more follows from this that Liberalism has a purpose, than it follows from the fact that footballers try to score goals that the purpose of football is to score goals, or from the fact that because we pass laws in parliament that the purpose of parliament is to pass laws !

It may be said here that not all functions need to be understood in terms of conscious design or intention. For example, certain actions might have unintended consequences which lead them to function in a certain way. The digestive system is not consciously operated by a human, and was certainly not designed directly, yet it clearly has a function in terms of the human body. Nothing I have said above is intended to controvert this view, there are indeed unintended consequences of actions and non-designed functions. My point, however, is to

suggest that though the Marxist may argue that the function of parliamentary democracy is to subvert the proletariat, by turning its attention to the meaningless rituals of the form of power, whilst distracting them from the reality of a class based society (even though there are not evil conspirators in the wings who have designed it for that purpose), there is no sense in which this opinion can be given an independent expression outside Marxism and subject to conformation or rejection by objective criteria, since all the evidence that the Marxist can point to can also be used by a Liberal or Conservative to explain an entirely different version of events.

Everything in the Marxist sense, may be said to have a function because there can be unintended consequences which flow from it, But it is difficult to see how we can move from the consequences to the function without running into a logical error. The Marxists, proof that the function of parliament is to castrate the revolutionary zeal of the proletariat is of the form "If the function of parliament is to prevent revolutions there would be no revolutions. There are no revolutions, therefore that is the function of parliament," ie affirming the consequent.

If the above arguments are correct, then Miller has failed to distinguish the 'ideology' of his opponents from Marxist 'science' and has, therefore, given us no reason for accepting his analysis of the term as being a profitable tool for the understanding of politics. This was the substance of the criticisms of Marx offered by Mannheim in 'Ideology and Utopia'; Marxism is seen as a partial view of the world and is, in its own terms, ideological. Mannheim offers the solution based upon the conception of the sociology of knowledge and classless (in this sense, disinterested) intellectual. It is not my intention

to discuss his views here, since it may be argued that they are susceptible to the very arguments we have used against Marx.²³

Instead I want to look at a rather different view of ideology put forward by Michael Oakeshott. Unlike those philosophers who see the identification of contradiction at the heart of understanding ideological thought, Oakeshott holds that the ideologist has misconceived the nature of political activity and that is this fact which has led to the spectacular disasters in the name of reason, justice and liberty. The Liberal search for rational principles to govern political activity has led to practical chaos. It is, however, worth noting that part of the exercise is, as with Marx, to distinguish between the ideological and one's own political views. For Oakeshott, Conservatism is a disposition rather than a settled doctrine or series of dogmas. It is the preference for the known over the unknown and the familiar over the unfamiliar, allied to the belief that the mastery of politics is the result of a combination of skills that arise from engagement in that practice. This distinguishes the Conservative from his 'rationalist' opponent who attempts to run society according to a 'plan' which depends upon abstract principles rather than concrete experience. Ideology is, for Oakeshott, an attempt to abridge experience or a practice by setting down guiding principles which serve as a 'crib' for the politically inexperienced or unsophisticated. His analogy is of the difference between the master chef who has learnt the art of cookery and whose projects and skill stem from his experience on the one hand, and the kitchen boy with a cook book on the other. The

²³ Manning, op cit, 4.

kitchen boy does not lack technical information about ingredients, but the experience that cannot be taught except by doing.²⁴

Two comments need to be made here. Firstly, it is not clear how an ideology can, in Oakeshott's sense, be an abridgement. An abridgement is, presumably a shortened version of a practice and it must be in the same logical form as that which it shortens. Thus a book cannot be an abridgement of a practice, it stands apart from practice. An ideological treatise is neither an abridgement of political activity, nor of a particular ideology since there is more to Liberalism and Marxism than the writings of Mill or Marx.

Secondly, though there may well be Conservatives of an Oakeshottian 'type' who reflect unselfconsciously, this will not do as a description of Conservatism. Indeed, it is important to see here that Oakeshott's views are as much a contribution to Conservatism as a comment upon it. There are certainly many Conservatives who would take a different view of political activity (see for example Lord Hailsham's 'The Conservative Case')²⁵, including views which might involve the Oakeshottian charge of 'rationalism'. Thus whilst we can say that Oakeshott is part of the Conservative tradition, his is not the only genuine form of Conservative thought. If we look at Noel O'Sullivan's view²⁶ that Conservatism is the 'politics of imperfection' and a 'limited style of politics' (which may even involve the view that politics is unimportant) it is still true that this involves an engagement in politics rather than an elegant commentary on political activity. If

²⁴ Oakeshott's views are contained in Rationalism in Politics, (London: Methuen, 1962)

²⁵ London: Penguin, 1959

²⁶ N O'Sullivan, Conservatism (London: J M Dent, 1976)

Conservatism can be said to have arisen as a self-conscious reaction to the French Revolution then it competes with Liberalism and Socialism, and as such differs from sexual or moral conservatism or attachment to a favourite pair of slippers. It is not a series of subjective personal attitudes and Conservatives do not see it as such; Conservatives, no less than Liberals or Socialists have a view of appropriate political institutions best suited to human nature.

II

So far we have ignored the positive identification of ideological thought and its place in political activity. Any alternative account to that offered by Marx or Oakeshott cannot presumably consist of merely listing other past or present uses. Rather it would have to establish other appropriate connections between those entities identified as ideologies and offer grounds for distinguishing them from, say, moral or religious arguments.

As we shall see, there are dangers to be avoided here, either in the form of offering a stipulative definition or looking for a common essence (both within a particular ideology and amongst ideologies in general). What I wish to do here is to offer some preliminary remarks upon the characteristics of those ideologies we will be seeking to understand and to investigate. I do not, of course, claim that this will neatly encompass everything. For example, it might be suggested with some justification that Anarchism is an ideology and yet it is difficult to see what sense can be made of it in terms of specifying its content with sufficient precision to bring it within our framework. Again, it is plausible to argue that there are some ideologies in the process of coming into being - such as Feminism -

and that they are difficult to classify along with long established traditions of ideological thought such as Marxism, Conservatism and Liberalism.

The first characteristic worth noting is that we are dealing with something that is systematic in character. Systematic does not necessarily mean that they are coherent, but points to the fact that they are not a random set of opinions, nor are they about a special part of political life. Any and every aspect of political life is relevant and can be accommodated within an ideological framework. Indeed it is precisely this universality (we can explain anything!) that is seen as a reason for the superiority of an ideology over its rivals. There are, we might say, no surprises for the ideologist. This last claim needs to be approached with some caution. I do not mean that ideologists are completely indifferent to the facts, or that they are not sometimes (if only initially) confounded by events; for example, some Marxists were surprised by the Russian Revolution. What I mean here is that no event can fail to be interpreted within the logical framework of an ideology. Thus Lenin was able to account for events in Russia by revising Marxism, but not its categories of reference.

Related to this systematic character is the fact that ideologies are self-conscious reflections or responses to political circumstances. The idea of an unconscious Marxist (in the Freudian, rather than the medical sense) is a bad joke. It is this self-conscious aspect that allows particular ideologies to develop as traditions of thought with a sense of continuity, rather than as a series of ad hoc responses to circumstances, and to develop a distinctive vocabulary of politics, a tradition of thought, accepted authorities and so on that sets them apart from opponents.

Given the systematic and self-conscious nature of ideological thought it is not surprising that Liberalism, Marxism and Conservatism (to take the three examples we shall be most concerned with) are all informed by a view of human nature and political activity which binds adherents together and distinguishes them from opponents. Liberals, for example, ~~tend~~ to see men as autonomous individuals, whereas Socialists see men as, above all, producers. Though it may be possible within a particular ideology to dispute about the correct Liberal or Marxist version of human nature, there are limits to how far this can go. It would not be open for a Liberal, qua Liberal to conclude that man is alienated by the capitalist mode of production. This is not to say that Liberals do not or should not use the term alienation, but they use it, I would suggest, in a metaphorical sense that is different from the more technical use the term has in Marxism. In a similar way, the Liberal sees political activity as the engagement of 'reason' in human affairs, whereas the Marxist would see politics as the conflict between classes and above all about power.

It is worth making a distinction at this point between an ideology such as Marxism and a particular political party such as the Bolsheviks or International Marxist Group who are Marxist parties. Marxism creates a framework within which genuine (for Marxists) political activity can take place. It is about general beliefs (all history is the history of class struggle) which might be used to justify particular proposals (the liquidation of the Kulaks, execution of the royal family, etc.). Marxist parties who disagree with each other all attempt to justify their particular programmes by appeals to the theoretical works of Marx and Lenin and to evidence which supports their case. Whether or

not agreement is possible is another matter, and it might be noted here that Marxists of varying kinds have never found it that difficult to justify a particular policy through reference to Marxist texts, or to evidence. A related point is that the relationship between the theorists of an ideology (such as Lenin or J S Mill) and the members of a political party which bases itself on that ideology, is not one of master and pupil. By that I mean that there is not a one way traffic in which the theorists lay down correct solutions which members then put into practice. Rather, there is often a complex interaction between the two and in many cases political change precedes theoretical revision rather than vice versa (eg Trotsky and Stalin). A consequence for the view of ideological language that we have been discussing here is to note that although the purpose of the language of Liberalism or Marxism is, at any given time, to put a distance between that ideology and its rivals, it is possible that this language will change over time such that terms which were once exclusively the property of a particular group are used by opponents. An example of this would be the way in which modern Conservatism has taken over many of the terms and features of eighteenth century and nineteenth century Liberalism. Ideologies do, of course, change over time. Indeed it is quite vital to their survival as relevant instruments for bringing about political change that they adapt to new circumstances and account for them. Thus Marxism has had to account for the fact of the Russian Revolution through Lenin's 'discovery' of Imperialism. Whether or not they do so is, to a great extent, a matter of historical contingency. For example, the success of the Russian Revolution has enabled Marxism to survive in a way that National Socialism could not survive the collapse of the Third Reich. But things could easily have happened

the other way around.

So far we have seen that ideologies are systematic, self conscious attempts to understand political practice on the basis of certain general principles which are held to illuminate those features of practical life that might puzzle these wishing to engage in political activity. It follows from this that the point of ideological activity is not merely to understand the world, but to change it. Hence the need for political parties which can generate concrete programmes for transforming the imperfect world we live in, or protecting it from the insane plans of rationalists. There is an obvious absurdity in the Marxist who will not engage in revolutionary activity or the Nationalist who will not work for independence. The ideologist offers a description of how things are and a prescription of how things should be if men are to live lives appropriate to their nature as 'unalienated men' or free born Scotsmen. This description is, typically, advanced as something based upon an unbiased and objective account. Ideologists see themselves as dealing in uncontroversial truths which can be supported by 'academic' research, unlike their opponents who offer speculative metaphysics or barren rationalism. Thus the ideologist claims to be in possession of general criteria which are 'objective' and that a correct grasp of these principles is necessary for successful engagement in political activity.

A further point worth making here is to look briefly at one aspect of ideological language. An important feature as we have noted is the way in which different ideologies not only offer different positions (in terms of which party we should join or vote for) but also express them in a distinctive language.

Terms such as alienation, national self-determination, autonomy, sexism and so on, do not merely describe the same events in a different way, they make a difference to the event itself. Capitalism for the Marxist is a different entity from capitalism for the Liberal, since capitalism in the Marxist sense also carries with it such notions as alienation, exploitation and so on, which the Liberal does not reject, but does not even use. Thus although we may be wary of the explanatory power of an ideological statement (such as 'The history of all, etc') we can scarcely deny the power of such sentiments to motivate the ideologically committed and to justify political programmes. In short, the mastery of the vocabulary of a particular ideology can give us relevant tools in terms of affecting or preventing political change. It was only because Lenin was able to convince the Russian Communist Party that his policies were the correct interpretation of Marxism that he achieved dominance in the Bolshevik Party and it was partly because Mrs Thatcher convinced Conservatives that her policies were the correct way of carrying through Conservative principles that she was able to become leader. My point is that Lenin could scarcely have appealed to Mill for support and that Mrs Thatcher's mastery of Marxist vocabulary would not have been appropriate in the context mentioned above.

Thus, whilst debates within a particular ideology may seem to be unsatisfactory to those outside, they are not irrational or arbitrary. This talk applies to the past as much as the present. In the context of our general argument here we can note that for the ideologist the past is a repository of practical wisdom wherein the righteousness or follies of friends and opponents may be perceived. A repository,

moreover, that is conceived of as being ~~no~~ different in kind from the present. Ideologists are not interested in the past for its own sake, but for the lessons it teaches us.

One final point needs to be cleared up in these introductory remarks on the characteristics of ideologies. It may be felt that if the Marxist and Liberal do see 'Capitalism' as two different entities then no communication and hence no argument (as opposed to challenge or dispute) is possible between them. They live in different worlds. There is some ~~truth~~ in this, and I shall argue later that one reason ideological disputes founder is that there are no accepted criteria between the two sides. However, the case should not be overstated. Ideologies are not all embracing in the sense that Liberals and Conservatives do share a common culture which provides the 'linguistic stock' from which their notions are taken. For example, someone like William Godwin may have rejected the notion of 'the family' and thus the concept 'father' may have had a different moral weight for Godwin than for a defender of 'the family', in terms of how that person should be treated. But though the divergence of view between Godwin and his opponent parallels that between two ideologists, their debate would only be comprehensible (as opposed to resolvable) if there were certain common concepts at work. People can and do change ideological persuasion, in some cases quite dramatically (eg Oswald Mosely, Douglas Woodruff), and there may be a whole host of reasons for this. An analogy would be with religious belief where, even though religion is about everything, it does not preclude the possibility of changing churches or even abandoning religion altogether. There is nothing unusual in this, for we do not live in a world that has hermetically sealed compartments, but where different areas

of thought overlap and interpenetrate ~~at~~ a considerable extent. Marxism and Liberalism are, after all, the products of the same culture in a way that Liberalism and Voodoo are not. It is almost a condition of them being rivals that we can see them in this way.

III

Though the section above has been an attempt to say something of the overall framework within which the concept of ideological thought will be discussed in this thesis, it is important to issue a brief warning against two errors that can creep in to discussion of this sort.

One temptation I wish to avoid is that of merely seeking a stipulative definition of ideology which will draw a neat boundary around the concept. Such a move would not, I suggest, do justice to the term, which is not a technical term for use in restricted theoretical settings but one which is used a great deal in politics and one which has, as I have argued above, its grey areas. Even if we accepted the desirability of such an enterprise, its possibility would still be in some doubt.

Suppose, for example, that we wanted a paradigm against which we could test candidates for inclusion in the category 'ideological'. What would we choose? A particular one? Then which one, and why Marxism rather than Liberalism or Nationalism? If we chose this one, do we need to test it against another paradigm to make sure that it has all the essential features of an ideology? What would we test that paradigm against?

If we abandon this and select features from all ideologies to give a composite picture, which features do we choose as being essential here? Do all ideologies have to have all these features (and in the same way,

otherwise our formula will be vacuous), and if not, how are these features essential ? How in fact would we go about selecting that group from which we choose these features - from those practices we call ideologies - but doesn't that beg the question ? If Liberalism is part of the sample from which our definition is built up, could we possibly find that it did not have enough features that are essential to an ideology ? How strange it would be to exclude that which was part of our original sample; rather like using Augustine, Aquinas and Rahner to provide a definition of Roman Catholicism and then using that definition to exclude Aquinas.

No ideology can be taken as a standard for all ideologies, they are too diverse to fit such a jacket. Neither can we really hope to find a common essence in them all for that either leads to vacuity or to illegitimately excluding something that common sense tells us ought to be in. The position is analogous to a definition of Christianity that would ensure Roman Catholicism and Pentecostal sects were included. The general problems that attend any attempt to find an 'essence' to all ideologies also apply to particular ideologies. In the final chapter I shall be looking at the problem of arguments amongst ideologists as to who are the true Liberals or Marxists, and who seek to exclude their opponents, in greater detail. However, it can still be noted here that there is simply no single set of arguments or core of doctrine that all Liberals or Marxists adhere to. Here we are very much at the mercy of the ideologies themselves. For example, Engels was a Marxist and not a Conservative, not just because of his theoretical stance, but because Marxists claim him as a source of inspiration and so on, whilst Conservatives refuse to admit him as one

of their own. There may, of course, be borderline cases such as Sir Henry Maine, F Hayek, and Milton Friedman or those who change allegiance or are expelled for dissent; but none of this changes the point I am making; indeed, it confirms the indeterminate nature of ideological pigeon-holing.

If we look at three authors who are universally recognised as Liberals, J S Mill, T H Green and Herbert Spencer, we can see that belonging to the same ideology does not mean that they necessarily share common arguments or even presuppositions. It is difficult to imagine a moral doctrine further removed from the Utilitarianism of Mill than T H Green's, and it is equally difficult to see the relationship between both of them and Spencer's biological doctrines about human nature. But, as I shall argue later on (again, in the final chapter) it would be absurd to see any of them as the true Liberal, or to see Liberalism as an amalgam of all three positions.

Even Marxism, where we are inclined to think that acceptance of common authorities and common terms must lead to some uniformity, turns out to be a diverse ideology. If, as Henry Drucker suggests²⁷ these debates, quarrels and constant splits remind us how much the disputants have in common, they also serve to remind us how futile the search for the essence of Marxism is.

To say that we cannot, in the sense indicated above, find a firm foundation from which our enquiry can flow should not lead us into making two antithetical errors. Firstly, it should not paralyse us into thinking that nothing at all can be said. The lack of a

²⁷ Drucker, op cit, 98.

stipulative definition, or even a sharp, precise boundary to a concept does not mean that all attempts to use it must be riddled with ambiguity and confusion. In the Blue Book Wittgenstein wrote:

I want you to remember that words have those meanings which we have given them; and we give them meanings by explanations. I may have given a definition of a word and used the word accordingly, or those who thought me the use of the word may have given me the explanation. Or else we might, by the explanation of a word, mean the explanation which, on being asked, we are ready to give. That is, if we are ready to give any explanation; in most cases we aren't. Many words in this sense don't have a strict meaning. But this is not a defect. To think that it is would be like saying that the light of my reading lamp is no real light at all because there is no sharp boundary ... There are words with several clearly defined meanings. It is easy to tabulate these meanings. And there are words of which one might say: They are used in a thousand different ways which gradually merge into one another. No wonder that we can't tabulate strict rules for their use.

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None of this should be taken as endorsing the opposite error, namely that of saying the term ideology can mean anything at all. For a word that can mean anything means nothing. It could have no possible application or use. There has to be something that is non-ideological so that a contrast can be drawn with that which is ideological. Difficult cases at the logical perimeters of a concept do not mean that there is no difference between using that word and another. Even if the edge to the beam of my reading lamp is fuzzy, there is still a difference between dark and light. When Wittgenstein wrote in the passage quoted "words have meanings we have given them" he did not mean that language is something that human beings have invented, or that they decide in general what words mean. On the contrary, we are born into a society that already

²⁸ L Wittgenstein, Blue and Brown Books (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958) 27.

has a language with a variety of concepts, and that this language provides the background against which decisions or innovations are taken. Once we have learned a certain amount of a language we can adopt, 'stretch' and even introduce, terms on the basis of existing usage. But this background must not be forgotten, and the difference between it (and the possibilities it provides) and deciding how (in some cases) to use a word, is akin to the difference between learning a foreign language and learning one's native tongue. If such a background did not exist then communication would be impossible, for everyone would have a private language, that is, not a language at all. In this sense, ideology is one of those terms that we find in use, a term with a variety of uses. Sometimes it is used in a fairly technical sense, as with Marx, at other times more generally, as with Mannheim, and sometimes in a fairly loose sense, as when people talk about ideologies, meaning any set of opinions. It is already a term that runs close to, or can be contrasted sharply with other areas of human life such as religion or science. What we are required to do is not to find the correct meaning or use, but to see how all these uses are related and to guard against the temptation to say that since we characterise many different activities as ideological then they all must be ideological in the same sense. And this question is, of course, related to the way in which the term is used in these different contexts.

I shall then, be looking at one way in which the terms ideology and ideological are used, namely as referring to Marxism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Nationalism and the like. I shall try and say something about the characteristics of these ideologies and give grounds for putting them in the same category. I shall also contrast them

with other areas of thought and activity and in certain cases try and show that areas believed to be closely connected are not connected in that way at all, despite superficial appearances to the contrary. To say "But why call Liberalism ideological?" might just mean "Why don't you include Catholicism and the opinions of the Mother's Union?" or "Why call Liberalism an ideology when it is plainly true and based upon undeniable facts about human nature?" (that is it is like science and not like its rivals which are based upon error and confusion), and here all that can be done is to try and show the differences that there are between Liberalism and Catholicism etc, on the one hand, and the reason why it isn't scientific or 'true' on the other. In another sense the question is misconceived in the way that asking "Why is a red object red?" is misconceived if the answer "It just is red" fails to satisfy and end the questioning.²⁹

So far I have mentioned Marxism, Liberalism, Conservatism and Nationalism as examples of political ideologies. They are not an exclusive club that admit of no other members, I could for example have included National Socialism, Socialism and Fascism. Some are more prominent today than others; Marxism is often taken to be an idea whose time has come. On the other hand, some are in decline. There are I suspect, very few Fascists outside of right wing groups in Italy and the remnants of Franco's support in Spain.

In saying that I shall be comparing ideologies such as Marxism and Liberalism it must be noted that I shall be, as it were, laying them side by side so that they can be compared rather than attempting to

²⁹ cf S Cavall, Must we mean what we say (New York: Charles Sembrer's Sons, 1969), I-44.

compress them into each other. In the end they must be left to speak for themselves and shown in all their fullness. They are not, in this sense, capable of further reduction without distortion. That is, they do not break down into something more basic, either in terms of social formation or personal psychology. If they still remain opaque, unintelligible or merely seem pointless to us then they have failed, but to pursue them beyond this point would be to alter their character and to distort and falsify them.³⁰

I hope that the above discussion has avoided a too narrow casting of the net, and at the same time avoided opening the category 'ideology' to everybody and everything. Mannheim, I think, tends to make too much ideological and only raises the same problem at a later stage, viz. how to distinguish within the category of ideology. An analogy with the philosophy of mind might help here. Materialists assert that everything is reducible, without remainder, to statements about physical terms and therefore to the laws of science. Mental states, for example, are reducible to facts about the brain. This position is well known for difficulties that arise, but the only point I wish to note here is that materialists are forced to re-introduce the distinction they seek to abolish by admitting that thoughts and ideas are very different forms of matter.³¹ By the same token, to say that Marxism, Liberalism, science and the opinions of the League Against Cruel Sports are all ideological only means that we will have to differentiate amongst them at a later stage. Thus, though a wider use of the term ideology is legitimate for its own purposes, I tend to find it con-

³⁰ cf How certain types of analysis do precisely this. Fraud or Frazer on religion, for example.

³¹ This example comes from K R Minogue, The Liberal Mind (London: Methuen, 1963).

fusing because it includes so much. The difference between it and the use I am characterising can best be stated by saying that whilst I am talking of Ideologies, writers such as Mannheim speak of Ideology. The latter term seems to resemble what Professor Walsh calls the pre-suppositions of a society or age.³²

A final point to be made here is that unlike Marx or Mannheim I am not offering a theory about ideologies. I am not trying to explain them in terms of social formation or social psychology. Indeed, there may be nothing special to explain here. These remarks, are, I repeat, philosophical and the relationships I am investigating are philosophical. Attempts to understand ideologies in terms of social psychology may raise philosophical difficulties, but that is another matter.

IV

I shall now consider the objection that philosophy is only offering a rival ideological viewpoint about ideologies. This view is surprisingly common. For example, Henry Drucker writes

I argue here that our several notions of ideology are each of them appropriate to our own ideology. That is, we disagree because we see ideology from an ideological point of view. We see it as Conservatives, Liberals or Marxists. There is enough agreement between the various camps to assure us that we are talking about the same thing, but little more than that.³³

The last sentence seems to give away nearly everything that has been claimed in the first part of the passage, for, in exactly what sense is Liberalism as seen by a Marxist, the same as Marxism seen by a

³² See his The Causation of Ideas, History and Theory, Vol 14 (1975), 186-97.

³³ Drucker, *op cit*, xii.

Liberal ? If Drucker's first assertion is correct then all that Liberals, Marxists and Conservatives are agreed upon is that their opponents are a) ideologies b) wrong. It is not clear, however, that 'Liberalism-as-an-ideology' seen by Marxists as 'unscientific' is the same as 'Marxism-as-an-ideology' seen by Liberals as non-scientific and irrational and that both are the same as 'Liberalism-as-an-ideology' and 'Marxism-as-an-ideology' seen by Conservatives as rationalism in different guises.

But even leaving these difficulties aside, it still seems that Drucker is saying that there cannot be a position on these matters that is non-ideological. Indeed, he specifically rejects the opportunity to try and formulate such a position, though his reason for doing so, "Who would listen" strikes one as rather disappointing.

What is not in doubt is the fact that in some cases political philosophers have written ideological works. Two works that might be mentioned in this context are Oakeshott's "On Being Conservative"³⁴ and Popper's "The Open Society and its Enemies"³⁵. It is easy to agree with Alasdair MacIntyre that writers such as Bell, Lipset and Shils fall precisely into this category. Indeed, when we find Lipset writing that

"... democracy is not only or even primarily a means through which different groups can attain their ends or seek the good society; it is the good society itself in operation." ³⁶

³⁴ In Rationalism in Politics, 168-197.

³⁵ K R Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1945).

³⁶ S M Lipset, Political Man (London, Heinemann, 1960).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is as ideologically uncritical of Liberalism as he is methodologically critical of its opponents. But the fact that ideology and philosophy are often conflated within the covers of the same book is clearly not the point at issue here. What matters is whether or not we can find grammatical differences between them. The fact that philosophers may be elected to parliament says nothing about their competence, either as philosophers or politicians. The fact that ideology and philosophy can, as it were, come together in a book or person does not mean that we cannot distinguish conceptually between them, just as the fact that mass and extension are inseparable in a physical object does not mean that we cannot distinguish between them.

The identification of philosophy, especially philosophy as it is currently practiced in Britain and the USA, with ideology is a theme that runs through Alasdair MacIntyre's book "Against the Self Images of the Age".³⁷ It is a view that is shared in some respects by the authors of the earlier issues of the magazine 'Radical Philosophy'. In the first issue of that journal we find the editors asserting that

Contemporary British Philosophy is at a dead end. Its academic practitioners have all but abandoned the attempt to understand the world, let alone to change it. They have made philosophy into a specialised, academic, subject of little relevance to anyone outside a small circle of professional philosophers ... As well as exposing the poverty of so much that passes for philosophy, we shall aim to understand its causes. We need to ask whether its barrenness is the inevitable consequence of its linguistic and analytical methods, as opposed to, for example, its application to trivial 'problems'. We shall ... investigate its ideological role in the wider culture. 38

³⁷ A C MacIntyre, Against the Self Images of the Age (London, Duckworth, 1971). Hereafter referred to as ASIA.

³⁸ Radical Philosophy, 1, (Spring 1972), 1.

Later on, attacking the defence of 'Oxford Philosophy' by Geoffrey and Mary Warnock, they write:

They (the Warnocks) claim that Radical philosophy seeks to make philosophy - an otherwise neutral field - 'political'. We, by contrast, assert that the sort of philosophy the defend has functioned politically, as ideology; we have no need to make philosophy ideological, it is so already.³⁹

The political role of philosophy is not restricted to questions within moral or political philosophy.

On the contrary, the more abstract discussions of epistemology, logic, etc., can be equally active as ideology, even though their social effects are less direct and less immediately apparent.⁴⁰

MacIntyre's views are set out in the introduction to ASIA and are part of a call for a "genuinely post-Marxist ideology of liberation".

Like the radical philosophers, MacIntyre seeks to bring out the unity of philosophy and ideology. He writes that:

The unity of this book resides in the aspiration to link philosophical criticism with ideological commitment.⁴¹

He claims that

The nature of contemporary academic philosophy in the Anglo-Saxon world has contributed in a marked way to the persistence amongst us of certain uncriticised ideological concepts and values.⁴²

³⁹ Radical Philosophy, 3, (Winter, 1972), 1

⁴⁰ Ibid, 1

⁴¹ MacIntyre, op cit, 93

⁴² Ibid, viii

This illustrates the fact that

... philosophy may thus appear to guarantee one way of looking at the world by seeming to demonstrate its necessity: and this is the key role of inadequate philosophy in underpinning ideology.⁴³

The upshot of this, both for MacIntyre and the Radical Philosophers is that " ... a good deal of what I have characterised as ideology not only overlaps with the proper concerns of philosophy, it is philosophy."⁴⁴

There are two separate, though related arguments here; firstly, that philosophy and ideology are in certain respects identical (that is they are the same activity) and secondly, that philosophy can underpin an ideology, either by demonstrating its necessity or by demonstrating the incoherence of its rivals. I think that both views are mistaken. My own position can be stated by constructing a parody of the earlier quotation from 'Radical Philosophy', "On the contrary, not only are the more abstract discussions of logic and epistemology non-ideological, so are the seemingly practical questions dealt with by moral or political philosophy."

We have already seen that the ideologist is concerned to try and change things by guiding people to act in one way rather than another. In saying something about this I wish to draw the reader's attention to the fact that philosophy is understood here as being concerned with thought of a certain kind, not people and their view of the world. That is to say, there is a distinction between practical problems

⁴³ Ibid, ix

⁴⁴ Ibid, 6

that we face, and philosophical problems that we work at.⁴⁵ To say that something is a philosophical argument, or to say that such and such is a matter for philosophy rather than history or psychology, is to draw attention to the form of that argument and to be able to recognise what would count as a valid objection to, or modification of, that position; as opposed to an irrelevant interjection such as "But that's unscientific" on the other. As we have already seen, we distinguish between philosophy and history or science on the grounds that they are different activities, not that they are the same activity but with a different subject matter. There may be borderline cases, but there is also broad agreement between philosophers about what would be recognised as an objection and so on. Even major departures in philosophical thought are built upon ground previously accepted by the practitioners of the subject. Otherwise it would be difficult to link those changes with that activity.

Thus, although Hegel was a German and Aristotle a Greek, there is, strictly speaking, no such entity as German or Greek philosophy (if Aristotle's philosophy were completely different from our own, how could we characterise any of his arguments as philosophical?). Although there are many schools of philosophers, Stoics, Scholastics, Positivists and so on, they are not doing more or less adequate types of philosophy. Philosophical coherence is something that is achieved within philosophy and not something that is true of philosophy, or types of philosophy, as a whole. Though the philosophers who debated with Plato or Descartes are dead and gone, their positions

⁴⁵ I owe this observation to Mr D H Raelid.

can always be revived. It is, after all, a standard move in philosophy to take a position that appears to be discredited and to show that the arguments are in fact, valid. The long history of the 'Ontological Argument' is a good example of this. It is difficult, therefore, to see precisely the sense in which MacIntyre can talk of something called 'Anglo-Saxon' philosophy and the Radical philosophers can speak of 'Oxford Philosophy', as if they were more or less adequate types of philosophy, other than as rhetoric.

Now because it is an activity, philosophy cannot be seen as atemporal. My point, however, is that the temporal nature of philosophy is not akin to the temporal nature of ideological arguments. Philosophical positions can be revived and refought in a way that ideological conflicts cannot be recreated. Though both types of conflict must be placed in an appropriate context, the context for understanding a philosophical argument involves understanding the logical relations between ideas, not the relationship of those ideas to contingent facts outside of philosophy, such as the relationship between disputing political parties. We can argue with Kant and Plato in a way that we cannot dispute with Burke or Paine.

This point may become clearer if we look at the way in which a philosopher and an historian might be interested in Aristotle. For the historian, the character "Aristotle" might be important in a number of ways. He is important within a certain narrative, as is the fact that he wrote the Nichomachean Ethics, the Politics, the Prior and Posterior Analytics and so on. If some of these works were found to be forgeries, or had been written earlier or later than had been previously thought, then the historian would be forced to reconsider his conclusions in the light of the new evidence. But in

philosophy the person "Aristotle" never appears, except as a personification (as for example in science). For philosophy "the person who is the author of the Politics" is irrelevant. What matters is the coherence of the arguments put forward (and the arguments are not the property of Aristotle or anyone else). If the works mentioned were shown to be written by another Greek, the Holy Spirit or a monkey with a typewriter, it would not have the slightest bearing within philosophy; the arguments would still be good or bad, valid or senseless; and it is this aspect that is the subject matter of philosophy.

Though we invariably start philosophising on the basis of those questions raised by the great philosophers of the past, once we start to philosophise they must drop out of consideration, and do so before the philosophy starts. This does not mean that we treat the great philosophers of the past as mere question setters, or sterile repositories of valid arguments to be selected and put together like some kind of intellectual jigsaw. That would be the very antithesis of philosophy. But it would be the antithesis of philosophy not because we had been guilty of poor exegesis (though they may be of great importance in another context) but because we saw philosophy as the assembling of 'correct' answers rather than a matter of questioning received opinions in the appropriate manner. That is, the first thing to realise in philosophy is that other philosophers cannot answer my philosophical problems, in the sense that I have to work through those problems and become convinced of the truth of an argument, even if that argument turns out to be one advanced in the past by Plato or Hume. The philosopher cannot build on a foundation of previously established 'valid' arguments without having tested them

for himself. This attitude is, I believe, exemplified by the Socratic injunction "Think not of Socrates, think of the truth". The point being made is that the philosopher must go wherever truth takes her and ~~that~~ the pursuit of this understanding is greater than any human. Thus, we may consider the works of a philosopher in order to gain a greater understanding of a certain argument that is advanced, and in the course of this be brought to understand an argument and to believe it to be true, whereas before we had only partly understood its implications and because of this held it to be false. But if we say "Walsh has made me understand X" the relationship between Walsh and the understanding is still a contingent one, that is, the teacher is the occasion for ~~the~~ understanding. Kierkegaard puts the matter like this

From the standpoint of Socratic thought, every point of departure in time is eo ipso accidental, an occasion, a vanishing moment. The teacher himself is no more than this; and if he offers himself and his instruction on any other basis, he does not give but takes away, and is not even the other's friend, much less his teacher.⁴⁶

None of this should be taken as denying the importance of exegesis, or of the importance of the history of philosophy. The point is that the former cannot be a substitute for philosophical thought of our own and the latter is history, not philosophy.

Once we start to do philosophy, we step outside the confines of any text. It is therefore irrelevant that G E Moore was unfair to Berkely in his 'Refutation of Idealism'⁴⁷ as Collingwood claims.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ S Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans D F Swenson (Princeton Univ. Press, 1946), 6-7.

⁴⁷ G E Moore, A Refutation of Idealism, Mind, vol 12, 1903, 433-53.

⁴⁸ R G Collingwood, An Autobiography (London, Clarendon Press, 1939), 22

What matters is that Moore's arguments refute the arguments he is attacking, not whether anyone holds those arguments or not. Moore's exegesis (and sense of fair play) are subject to different criteria. Put another way, the argument is not between Moore and Berkeley at all, but about the validity of certain arguments.

It might be objected at this point that although historical or exegetical arguments are irrelevant to the validity of philosophical arguments, they are necessary (or at least important) for the understanding of any particular argument. In other words, my philosophical remarks on ideological writings will need accurate exegesis based upon historical research in order to bear the weight put upon them.

There is some force in this, but it must not be overstated. Firstly, it can be said to miss the point we are trying to establish for in philosophy we are not concerned with a particular person's arguments as they were put forward in the past, but with any argument of a certain kind. Secondly, though it may be true to say "If you really want to understand the arguments of Descartes or Plato you should really learn French, Latin and Ancient Greek, for that is how those arguments were originally expressed and any translation will lose some of the subtlety of the thought" it does not follow that this involves any history any more than a child learning German from a parent also learns German history. What we would need to understand in Descartes would be how the various concepts hold together in French or Latin, and these concepts may have an origin in time, but that is a different matter. I may, after all, use the term 'germ' correctly without knowing anything of its origins. Thirdly, though historical research may throw up a new book by Hume which challenges previous interpretations of his views on, say, ethics, it is not clear that it is



the activity of history which helps us to understand the new text. Though a text may be of limited use on its own (Skinner's point about 'poring over the great books') looking at the relevant historical background may not help us. It would certainly be of limited use, for example, if Hume were using a new term or an old term in a new way. Consider the analogy with someone who wishes to see what Wittgenstein means by the term 'grammar' in the "Philosophical Investigations". Someone might say, "Look at the way the term was generally used in the mid 20th century" and the enquirer might then go away and read J L Austin and others. But the conclusion reached would be that grammar was something found in English text books and this would be completely contrary to the way in which Wittgenstein was using the term as is clear from the paragraphs in which he introduces the term.⁴⁹

Looking at the background would have given us the wrong answer since Wittgenstein was using the term in an atypical way.⁵⁰ The point is that if what Hume means by a term isn't clear from the text then historical research (as opposed to looking at other texts of Hume's) would be of limited value.

Indeed, suppose a new work of Hume was discovered with the term 'fabulous' in it, but no clear indication of how it was intended. An appeal to other works by Hume might help, but what is this background we are falling back on, other than works and documents? How do we understand in the first place how Hume is using that term, so that we can apply it to his later work, other than by interpreting its use

⁴⁹ L Wittgenstein, op cit, paras 7ff.

⁵⁰ As G E Moore in fact remarked "He was, I believe, using the term in an atypical way". Quoted in J Passmore, One Hundred Years of Philosophy (Penguin Books, 1968), 426.

in that first work or document. In other words, the first work we have is on the same logical footing as the later work, and is not in any sense a more secure foundation for correctly interpreting the second work than the second one would be if it had been discovered first. But if the earlier work depends on precisely the same kind of interpretation as the second, in what sense do we need it ?

None of this should be taken as denying that philosophy has a history and that there is a role for exegesis. The point being established is that a philosophical argument is not so much between people as positions which can be discarded or revived over time. Ideological arguments on the other hand are not like this. In order to see what is involved in an ideological argument we not only need to understand the terms in use, but also the particular circumstances in which the argument takes place. This is because ideological tracts such as Mill's 'On Liberty' or the 'Communist Manifesto' of Marx and Engels are as much political acts as reflections on such acts. I have already mentioned how Popper's 'The Open Society' is deliberately set in the context of the battle against totalitarianism, and the dispute on the French Revolution between Burke and Paine is another good example. The point of writing the works is important. In contrast, it is of not the slightest philosophical importance that William James is being attacked in the 'Philosophical Investigations' or that Descartes is Ryle's principle target in the 'Concept of Mind'. Though Lenin may have attacked his Marxist rivals through a book of philosophy when he wrote 'Materialism and Empiro-Criticism' that aspect could not be part of philosophy. When Wittgenstein dedicated the 'Philosophical Remarks' he expressed the wish that he could, like Bach, dedicate it to the greater glory of God. But the

dedication is not another line in the argument, any more than Bach's is another line of music.⁵¹

In an earlier passage I mentioned how Socrates, ~~wven~~ when faced with death, refused to compromise the search for philosophical truth.

Moreover, he urged his pupils not to hold onto arguments because he, Socrates, had held them when alive, but to always think first of the truth. There are no authorities in philosophy.⁵² It matters nought that Aristotle held X or Wittgenstein held Y. Not only could a philosophical argument not be settled by shwving that Hume held the opposite view, such a move would be inappropriate in the context of a philosophical discussion.

This is not true, however, of ideological arguments (and incidentally of some religious and moral arguments). In an ideological argument it may be appropriate to cite an authority, be it Mill, Marx or a tradition. In a religious argument between Christians of the same denomination for example, it would be entirely appropriate to rest one's case on the Bible as an authority. There may, of course, be arguments over interpreting the Bible, but that is a different matter. The authority of the Bible is a limiting concept in a religious argument. In a similar way, if a Marxist can show another Marxist that Marx did not hold a certain view, this can be enough to clinch

⁵¹ Again, I owe this example to Mr D H Raslid.

⁵² I mean here that there can be no appeal to authority, though it is also true to say that there are no authorities in philosophy in the way that there are authorities on Etruscan pottery or 12th century legal systems. That is, there is not a body of knowledge that a philosopher can become an expert in; when I say "Professor Walsh is an authority on the philosophy of history" I mean either that he is a good philosopher and has worked in this area over a long period of time, becoming aware of problems that show a depth of philosophical understanding, or that he knows a great deal about the writings of other philosophers in this area (or both).

matters. A lot of Lenin's writings are designed to show that his opponents were 'unMarxist'.⁵³ An example of this is a series of articles under the title "Is Nature Dialectical ?" in 'Marxism Today',⁵⁴ where the authors are not only discussing the coherence of certain arguments, but trying to decide whether they are 'Marxist' or not. Clearly, if one of the disputants were to admit that his arguments were 'unMarxist' then he would be forfeiting any claim to the allegiance of fellow Marxists in advocating a certain course of action. I do not say that the appeal to an authority is the only appeal that can be made, nor that it is always an overriding one. My claim is that it must be taken into consideration by the disputing parties. That is to say, it is part of the structure of the argument, not an irrelevant interjection.

V

If the above arguments have succeeded in distinguishing between ideology and philosophy as activities, then MacIntyre has conflated the two when he argued that "some ideology ... is philosophy". We can now turn to the second objection - the claim that philosophy can function as ideology by underpinning a particular account of political life, or demonstrating the incoherence of its rivals. The argument is simply that philosophy can affect practical decisions by showing that the grounds we were advancing for doing X were confused. Examples of this apparent relationship are not hard to find. A

⁵³ A fine example from personal memory is of a debate between Trotskyite and non-Trotskyite Marxists which ended when a member of the latter group read a letter of Lenin's which started with the words "What a swine that Trotsky is" .

⁵⁴ R Gunn, Is Nature Dialectical ? Marxism Today, Jan 1977, vol 21, no 2, 45-52
D Hoffman, Is Nature Dialectical ? Marxism Today, Feb 1977, vol 21, no 1, 11-18.

religious believer, who holds that there is life after death may, on the production of certain sceptical arguments, give up that belief and religion. It is important to note that this argument does not depend upon the validity of the criticisms of religious belief, merely that they are pertinent to the issue at hand.

But this in itself is not enough to establish the conclusions made by MacIntyre and the Radical philosophers. The fact that philosophers offer advice to their fellow citizens or persuade people to take a course of action is at best a comment upon their persuasive powers. What needs to be established is that there is a logical connection between philosophy and political activity, or as the Radical philosophers might put it, Conservatism is a consequence of 'Oxford philosophy'.

One argument against MacIntyre's position would be that he has failed to make a distinction between the act of being persuaded as a result of the philosopher's argument and the establishment of the validity of those arguments. The latter is a logical consequence. In short, the fact that after a conversation with a philosopher, X abandons religion only shows that he has been persuaded by the philosopher's arguments. What has not been shown is that X has been influenced by philosophical understanding. This may be seen as a trivial point, since most philosophers would accept that the only entailment from an argument is another argument, and yet wish to say that people act on the basis of arguments that they believe to be valid. My point is that this shows that the relationship between argument and action is a contingent one, and if that is the case, philosophy can only note that fact. It is also worth noting that the possibility of acting upon the advice of philosophers would always depend upon a society

being aware of their deliberations, and it is perfectly possible to imagine a society in which this was not so. One is reminded that when G E Moore received the OM from George VI he met his friends outside Buckingham Palace and announced in shocked tones "The King has never heard of Wittgenstein !"

The fact that philosophers may remain largely unknown in a society does not, however, mean that there is no connection between them and society in general. MacIntyre puts the point this way

Philosophy leaves everything as it is - except concepts. And since to possess a concept involves behaving or being able to behave in certain ways in certain circumstances, to alter concepts, whether by modifying existing concepts, or by making new concepts available, or by destroying old ones, is to alter behaviour.⁵⁵

This remark refers to the earlier quotation from Wittgenstein.⁵⁶ I hope it is not being unfair to MacIntyre to suggest that he sees philosophy as 'refining' or 'sharpening up' our concepts for everyday use. It would be untrue to suggest that Wittgenstein's view of philosophy 'forbids' changes in language and is, therefore, a form of social conservatism. Indeed, he specifically wrote

... a reform of ordinary language for particular purposes, an improvement of our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice, is perfectly possible. But these are not the cases we have to do with.⁵⁷

The point is that there are any number of ways of changing language, but philosophy does not have that task. As we noted earlier,

⁵⁵ A C MacIntyre, A Short History of Ethics (London: Routledge, & Kegan Paul, 1967), 2-3.

⁵⁶ See footnote 6.

⁵⁷ L Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, para 132.

philosophical clarification does not quite leave everything as it is, in the sense that our understanding of what is already there is deepened, but the ability of philosophical terminology to influence non philosophical areas will depend, not on philosophical criteria, but on those of the activity in question. There may be a distinction worth making here between 'ordinary' language and some of the more specialised fields such as the law, where, since the purpose of examining legal concepts is to make them more explicit and less susceptible to ambiguity, the role of philosophical analysis may be more influential, though no less contingent.

But Wittgenstein's point that philosophy is not, in general, about tidying up or refining language was also made by the late Gilbert Ryle in his paper 'Systematically misleading Expressions'.⁵⁸ It is important, he argues, for the philosopher to see the difference between the expressions 'The present Queen of France is bald' and "The present Queen of England is bald". The first one is not referential in the way that the second one is, and cannot therefore be true or false in the same way that the second one can be. Both Ryle and Wittgenstein base their attack on metaphysics on the grounds that it is a systematic form of grammatical confusion. But, as Ryle points out, the 'ordinary person' is not misled in any way by this difference, any more than 'ordinary' talk about 'It's at the back of my mind' or 'I really flew off the handle' misleads her into thinking that we have mysterious parts called 'minds' or 'handles'. If the ordinary person and his listener are clear enough about what they are saying then they don't need the philosopher to help them (and the

⁵⁸ C Ryle, Systematically Misleading Expressions, Proceedings of Aristotelian Society, Vol 32, 1931-32, 139-70.

philosopher must at least know what they mean, or he wouldn't know what he was analysing) and if they aren't using words intelligently, then it is pointless to ask what they really mean (since they could mean anything, or as Ryle puts it, to ask what they would mean if a rational man was using them, is to prompt the reply "They would ~~mean~~ what they would ~~mean~~"). Now in the same way a political argument might contain terms that would be misleading or insufficiently precise in the context of philosophy. Someone might suggest that Trade Unions are "above the law", and those with a philosophical turn of mind might reply that no-one can be (in that sense) above or outside the law since a society will have a series of legal relationships which will define the relationships of its members to each other. We are subject to the law by virtue of being citizens. But the politician might reply here "You know what I mean" and in the context this is true enough. The debate can continue without the intervention of philosophy being important or necessary.

The point to be stressed here is that philosophy is not a series of manoeuvres which can be inserted piecemeal into other activities. Because someone points out that a politician has contradicted himself, this does not mean that that person is engaged in philosophical thought or is doing philosophy. The context for the argument is important here, and I would suggest, if a philosopher were to take up the question of legal relations in our example, his or her movement would be away from the particular political debate to a more abstract set of relationships. Thus, though the examination of a political question may give rise to recognisably philosophical difficulties, the politician's attempts to solve these questions do constitute an engagement in philosophical thought.

I claimed earlier on that whilst practical problems are faced, philosophical problems are worked at. This can be seen more clearly if we look at the differences between sceptical and practical doubt. To use a common example, it may be difficult in a fog to see whether the object ahead is a scarecrow or a sleeping farmworker. As the fog lifts, or I get nearer, it becomes clear that it is a scarecrow. The doubt lifts along with the fog. But those philosophers who have doubted the existence of physical objects would not be satisfied. They doubt even when they are standing directly in front of an object, in perfect light. Berkely and Hume were puzzled by the account that could be given of reality, and its coherence or intelligibility. They did not try to walk through walls or carefully prod a chair to see if it existed before sitting down. Sceptical doubt is not caution on a grand scale ! Hume, as is well known, did not take his doubts to the backgammon board. We do not need philosophers to put our concepts in order before we can engage in political debate, any more than we need to refute scepticism about material objects before we can sit down or put our glass on a table. The American philosopher Robert Paul Wolfe introduces his book 'In Defence of Anarchism'⁵⁹ by saying that it was the only position left to him because he could find no philosophical foundation for the authority of the state. As an intellectual position this is odd, but defensible; it would, however, be quite absurd to suggest that if arrested by a policeman for a traffic violation Wolfe could reply "You can't arrest me officer, philosophers haven't sorted out the question of authority yet" !

⁵⁹ R P Wolfe, In Defence of Anarchism, (New York, Harper Row, 1970).

The word 'yet' is not unimportant here. One of the characteristics of a practical, or political decision is that it will not wait for ever. Though I may try and ensure that I have the best available evidence on which to base my decision, there comes a point when I have to do, or not do, X. I cannot say "Just let me read Capital once more, and then I will decide whether to join your attack on the Winter Palace". And of course a whole host of factors that could not be philosophical would also enter, such as whether or not the attack was likely to succeed. Though I might at a later date decide that the course of action adopted was wrong (I may even leave the Bolshevik party and join its opponents) there is a sense in which it was determinate at that time. That is, I cannot make that decision again, and if one were incapable of sustaining commitment to anything in practical life, there would be an important sense in which action was impossible.

But the impetus in philosophy is to take precisely the opposite path. I do not have to solve all the questions raised by ~~my~~ thesis at any particular time, even though it must be submitted by a certain date. Indeed, I can entertain complete indecision between competing arguments in a philosophical discussion, a path which would certainly make me an ineffective politician. This is related to my earlier remarks about the abstract nature of philosophical reasoning. As a politician I need to concentrate on the resolution of this issue, as a philosopher I move towards the discussion of what this kind of issue involves in any given case. And, of course, it may well be that my investigation shows me that there is no one correct answer. Finally, if political philosophy is to be concerned with ~~the~~ mapping of the framework within which those debates which are its subject matter

take place; in short if philosophical reflection on politics is to encompass all talk of politics, rather than a political view, then those conflicts and inconsistencies will be part of the 'given' for the philosopher and cannot be removed, for they help make politics what it is. This is not a plea for irrationalism, or a suggestion that anything can go, but to draw attention to the fact that there is plenty of room within politics for many interpretations and kinds of arrangements for a society and that it would be odd to believe that philosophy could resolve them. In fact, the resolution of such difficulties is just what we call politics, and political activity.

VI

In discussing the relationship between philosophy and ideology I have tried to establish some conclusions, the nature of which it is important not to misunderstand. Firstly, I have argued that philosophy and ideology are distinct activities, even if a good deal of ideological argument can be found in philosophical works. I have tried to show that turning towards the concerns of philosophy involves a turning away from the concerns of ideology and vice versa. Considerations that are of vital concern to ideological arguments, such as the likely success in persuading the public, or defeating the arguments of our opponents, the relationship of an ideological argument to the tradition from which it springs, whether the party will accept it and so on, are of no importance in a philosophical discussion. Indeed, to accept an argument on any of those grounds would mean that philosophical reflection had been abandoned. Socrates charged the Sophists with caring more about success and persuasion than truth. On a similar theme, I have suggested that - to use an

expression of Oakeshott's - philosophy is like a conversation that can be picked up at any time and where no conclusion needs to be reached. In contrast, immediate resolution is a feature of political debates, lest the opportunity be lost.

Secondly I have tried to show that philosophy does not, in any strong sense, underpin a particular ideology. People may, of course, be influenced by philosophers or quote philosophers in support of political demands, but that does not constitute an engagement in philosophy. The relationship between politics and philosophy is a contingent one, and philosophy can only note and explore the implications of that. It may well be that philosophers are active and interested in politics but it is a mistake to see their philosophical activity and political aims as two sides of the same coin. My suggestion has been that philosophical reflection on politics must look at all possible accounts of society, not choose qua philosopher between competing views. That choice is politics. Turning towards the practical implications of an argument (or vice versa) does not mark the extension of philosophical reflection into politics proper, but marks the turning away from philosophy by introducing elements that are foreign to philosophical thought. The change of context is vital here, for we cannot turn philosophy into politics merely by inserting a form of words from one into the other. As J L Stocks put it, the introduction of criteria that can be applied in a philosophical context into a political argument may be a prelude to philosophy, but it is not philosophy itself.⁶⁰

If this is so, then it is possible to offer a philosophical account of ideological thought, an account that is not an ideological rival.

⁶⁰ J L Stocks, The Need for a Social Philosophy, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol 36 (1936), 11-12.

CHAPTER TWO

History is concerned with the past, but not all statements about the past are historical. There is no obligation to treat an event, or series of events, in the past historically. For example, the work leading up to the construction of the first Atomic bomb and its subsequent dropping on Japan can be treated as a scientific matter, as a technological question, as a political problem, or in a moral way, as well as from the standpoint of history. We may even treat it, as C P Snow does in his novel 'The New Men', in a literary fashion. And the idiom in which we make our statements about it indicates the manner in which we understand it. This does not mean that the various elements mentioned above might not be found together in a particular narrative. It would be difficult to make sense of the example above without considering the relationship between the technological, political and moral aspects involved. Nor does it mean that in constructing an account of the how, why, who and where of that event, the historian will not be called upon to look at moral, political or technological considerations. The debate on whether or not to use a nuclear weapon would be unintelligible outside of a particular¹ moral climate (the issue of whether to use it on non-combatants), without certain technological considerations (the fact that large scale civilian casualties would occur) and outside of particular political considerations (the desire to avoid large American losses in an invasion, or to warn the Soviet Union). But it

¹ Particular in this context means a definite moral climate rather than only that moral climate pertaining at the time.

does mean that the point of the historians investigation is different from that of a novelist, a scientist or even a moral philosopher. To say this is to assert, in one form, the distinctive nature of historical questions and explanations.

But assertion, however confident, is not enough here. To say that historical inquiry is distinctive immediately gives rise to the question of how this is so. Two common objections to this view can already be stated. There are those who would hold as an epistemological principle that all genuine explanations share the same form: a form that is found, par excellence in science. History and science use the same framework but for different ends. Professor Hempel's "The function of general laws in history" is an example of this view.²

On the other hand, there are those who would argue that history must be permeated with evaluative notions (be they moral, political or ideological) and in this sense history is not distinct from our ordinary 'practical' talk of events. Again, though the terms used by the historian are applied to the past rather than the present, there is nothing that marks them out as belonging to a distinctive logical framework.

It may appear that whilst the second objection has obvious relevance, the first does not. Some ideologists have argued that history is not the impartial inquiry it seems, but merely exposes the rival ideological positions of various historians, whilst others have argued that it is the impartial study of the past that confirms their own view of events at the expense of their rivals. Though it is by no

² See his Aspects of Scientific Explanation, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 231-45.

means clear that the resolution of these issues would general conclusions conducive to either side, their relevance is obvious.³ The relationship between history and science (this is a rather crude way of putting it) on the other hand, might be seen as interesting but by no means central to the present thesis. What needs to be stated here is that this discussion will provide a prelude to later remarks upon Marxist views of history, where the possibility of a 'scientific' view of history is raised. Furthermore, it would not do to give the impression that the only alternative to the view that history is subjective and evaluative (in a pejorative sense) is that it must seek the objectivity of the natural sciences.

I

The question of the autonomy of history is a continuing source of dispute amongst philosophers. The principle of autonomy has for example been defended by those philosophers associated with the English idealist tradition, in particular, Collingwood and Oakeshott.⁴ Though there are important differences to be found in the positive account of history offered in their respective works, they are in agreement that 'the historian is master in his own house'.⁵ One important feature of Idealist treatments of history is that they are concerned with history in the context of a much wider question, viz. the nature of experience as a whole. Crudely put, Collingwood and Oakeshott are offering alternative 'maps' of experience, and the

³ In the sense that (1) leads to complete relativism in a pernicious sense and (2) would not generate the political prescriptions necessary for any group or party.

⁴ R G Collingwood, Speculum Mentis, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).
M J Oakeshott, Experience and its Modes (Cambridge, CUP, 1933).

⁵ R G Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 155.

coherence they seek to establish is not that of history, or indeed of any particular activity, but that which offers a complete account of 'experience'. In Speculum Mentis for example, Collingwood not only wants to distinguish between the various logical areas he discerns, but to grade them as parts of a hierarchy. In contrast, Oakeshott claims only to distinguish between the 'modes' that experience may take.⁶

The notion of the distinctive nature of various types of explanation (including historical explanation) is also associated with those philosophers who have been influenced by Wittgenstein. They have certainly rejected any attempt, in the sense understood by Idealists, to construct an overall picture of 'experience' but have concentrated on the argument that there is no all-embracing method of explanation to be found. This conclusion is not the product of a priori reasoning about 'experience' but the result of a patient investigation of what people do when they engage in certain activities. These activities reveal a number of 'language games' which are related (sometimes closely - magic and religion, sometimes more distantly - magic and science) but in which there is no paradigm of explanation to which all other methods must be measured. Though these activities or language games may, and do, overlap to a considerable extent. A claim which arises out of this view is that human beings as agents, ~~are~~ not part of the natural world and, are, therefore, not the objects of scientific investigation. To this extent they agree with Collingwood and Oakeshott.⁷

⁶ Oakeshott, op cit, 4.

⁷ It is interesting to contemplate the similarity in the conclusions reached by Wittgenstein and Oakeshott and the dissimilarity in their arguments. For a variety of reasons I do not agree with those who see Wittgenstein as "Idealism without the metaphysics".

For Collingwood, history is about individual events, not about universal connections. Moreover, the essential element in historical explanation is that of getting 'inside' the event by 'rethinking' the thoughts of the agents concerned. History is, for Collingwood, the history of Thought and in as much as we understand what Nelson did at Trafalgar, we also understand why he did it. The inner rationale which history seeks to uncover is quite different from the establishment of correlations between related phenomena and as such, is an inappropriate object for scientific study.

In Oakeshott, as we shall see in greater detail later on, the stress is not on 'rethinking' Nelson's deliberations (or those of his opponent) but on constructing an account which makes the joining of battle, the course of the battle and the outcome of the battle, intelligible in the circumstances described. The battle is placed within an identifiable set of conditions and circumstances and the complete description desired by the historian is one where all lacunae have been eliminated. Again, this is nothing like a scientific account, with its accent upon necessary and sufficient causes. In particular, the Humean concept of cause is eschewed by Oakeshott and in its place we find a conception more akin to events following each other such that Y is a reasonable and intelligible consequence of X. As we shall see later on, historical events (eg plagues and earthquakes) may be caused in the Humean sense, but that is not the point at issue here, since they are only referred to in the context of making human actions or reactions intelligible.

Both Collingwood and Oakeshott accept, implicitly at least, the idea of a non-universalisable context which makes an action what it is.

Idealism relies completely on the understanding of categories and

claims that changes in the world are changes in thought, or revisions in the terms by which we categorise our experience. This view rests on the insight that without shared criteria of identification, social norms, and, in particular, a shared language - all of which depend on the existence of the social, not natural world - we can know nothing and therefore say of nothing that it exists. Thus, the world is so only in as much as there are categories with which we may sort out and identify it. Different cultures (and epochs) may have different categories and in as much as there is no overlap between them, the inhabitants will live in different worlds. This view contrasts with those associated with the Empiricist tradition, where it is held that at all times and on every occasion, a harsh objective world imposes itself upon us.

In the case of those influenced by Wittgenstein, the context referred to above is the social life of a community with its rules and conventions. Wittgenstein, and more recently Peter Winch,⁸ have both argued at length that language, conceptual schema and behavioural patterns in a society are all complex kinds of rule following. Thus to understand a society at all, we will have to give an account that will be a more, or less, profound rendering of its rules and social practices and an elaboration that is more, or less, sensitive to what can and cannot be done in that society. By 'what can and cannot be done' I refer to rules in a constitutive rather than a regulative sense. In pre-Christian times we could not describe an activity as 'celebrating the Black Mass', and I could not claim, in modern Britain,

⁸ especially in L Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations and P Winch, The Idea of a Social Science.

to be a Roman citizen or as Chesterton noted, 'blaspheme against Odin'. If this is so, then the claim is that historical explanations are more like tracing internal connections between ideas, than the discovery of external links between contingently related phenomena. Thus, there is a negative agreement that history cannot be reduced to another method of inquiry, even if Wittgenstein or Winch would probably balk at the positive account of history offered by Idealist philosophers. As Winch himself has noted, if contexts change and if history is 'rethinking the thought' then it is difficult to see in what sense a modern youth can 'see' the knight's beloved in terms of the notions of mediaeval chivalry, let alone see her as the knight did.⁹

This does not, as yet, tackle the issue of evaluation and objectivity in history. Though an assertion of the distinctive nature of the historical method is to say that it is not the same as any speculation about the past, it does not follow that this excludes certain features that might be an irreducible part of a natural language such as ascribing praise and blame. Both these issues will be returned to shortly.

Against the view I have been describing is ranged a group of philosophers, the best known being Hempel and Popper. For Hempel, an explanatory argument consists of (i) a law or laws (ii) an initial condition or set of conditions (iii) a deduction from (i) and (ii) in the form of a statement reporting the event to be explained. In the case of Popper, the position is not quite the same, as he holds that historical explanation can be 'rational' or 'purposive', developing

⁹ Op cit, 132.

from the 'logic of the situation'. The main thrust of both arguments is, I take it, that a rational-type argument of the Idealist kind does not in itself explain why an event happened unless we already pre-suppose a law-like generalisation of the form "people in situation X generally (or always) do Y".¹⁰

A distinction worth emphasising at this stage is that those who reject the autonomy of history can do so on at least two grounds. Firstly there are reductionists, who would claim that scientific arguments (or the social sciences) can replace history and secondly those, of whom Hempel and Popper are examples, who claim that arguments in history and science use the same ingredients and exhibit the same logical structure, but use them for different purposes. It is not the method of inquiry that distinguishes history and science but the area of investigation. To sum up, the issues that arise out of the relationship between history and other activities are (i) can history be reduced to some science (ii) is there a single form of explanation in history and science (iii) does history arise sui generis (iv) must history involve practical/political values ?

II

Having sketched in some of the arguments surrounding the topic of the autonomy of history, I want to elaborate on a particular philosopher's defence of that autonomy. The philosopher I have chosen is Michael Oakeshott and my reason for doing so is that Oakeshott, although not a 'mainstream' figure in English philosophy, has, I believe, elaborated and developed this position with great clarity and had raised almost all

¹⁰ The views of both Popper and Hempel have changed from their initial formulations, but it is not our concern to chart the course of these changes here.

the important issues that we need to consider. I intend, therefore, to spend some time in discussing his views and possible objections to them.

I am certainly not claiming that Oakeshott's views are typical, either of historians or of philosophers. The fact that he fails to gain even a footnote in John Passmore's "100 years of British Philosophy" indicates how eccentric many hold his views to be.

Thus, two caveats need to be made here. Firstly, I am not primarily (if at all) offering a defence of Oakeshott's views; rather I am using his arguments to set the discussion in as clear a light as possible. It may well be that my subsequent exegesis merely indicates how far I have misunderstood those views but, as we have already seen, what matters is that the arguments should be worth philosophical discussion rather than that they are unambiguously attributable to a particular author. Secondly, as I have already noted, Oakeshott's discussion of history is within the more general context of his views on judgement and experience as a whole. I shall try and relate the two in the course of this exposition in those areas where clarity would otherwise be lost.

Oakeshott's views on the nature of history are largely contained in Chapter 3 of 'Experience and its Modes' and in an essay entitled "The Activity of Being an Historian"¹¹. As I have already noted above, Quentin Skinner has argued that it would be a gross methodological error to try and force the two pieces written some 30 years apart, into some sort of artificial unity - merely on the grounds that they share the same author - and say that they add up to something called "Oakeshott's views on history". In fact, if we look at them, they do

¹¹ In his Rationalism in Politics (London: Methuen, 1962), 137-167.

share a great deal in the form of argument and emphasis. It is worth pointing out, however, that I think Professor Greenleaf goes too far in his book 'Oakeshott's Philosophical Politics',¹² when he asserts that the later essay "added little to the earlier analysis of history ... save a stress on the way in which the practical disposition inhibited the appearance of a truly historical past".¹³ What strikes the present writer about the later essay is the stress upon the emergence of history and its development as an activity (as a game develops rules from an unstructured beginning) rather than on the existence of logical forms which are discovered by human beings but which are unchanging and do not develop (or rather it is our knowledge of them which develops).

It may be useful to start with the later discussion; for in 'The Activity of Being an Historian' Oakeshott considers the emergence of a particular human practice and the nature of reflection about that practice. There are, he claims, two directions that such reflections may take; we can examine whether or not the practice under discussion is 'a coherent manner of thinking about the world' and we can discuss the possibility of it being superceded by a superior method of understanding.

According to Oakeshott, the historian is distinguished by the kind of questions he or she asks about the past, for there is neither a single past, nor a single present. By this he means that any present experience can provoke a variety of responses within us. The demolition of a row of old buildings may provoke a mere movement of self-preservation

¹² W H Greenleaf, Oakeshott's Philosophical Politics (London: Longmans, 1966).

¹³ Ibid, 25.

(getting out of the way of the falling debris), or a more complicated response in which we feel elated at the prospect of progress (a medical school is to be built there), or depression over an act of vandalism (the buildings were fine examples of Georgian architecture).

Oakeshott maintains that there are three possible attitudes - the contemplative, the practical and the scientific.

The contemplative attitude is that exhibited in the works of poets or novelists, and though it may be interesting from a philosophical viewpoint it is not, strictly speaking, relevant to our discussion. I shall put it aside. The practical idiom is that in which we see the world and its contents as related to ourselves. That is, we see things as useful or useless, friendly or hostile, expensive or cheap. Typical utterances within the practical idiom would include such statements as "It's hot today", "You'll need to push it harder" or simply "Don't do that !" In the practical idiom, the term cause for example, is a sign that other events are likely to follow. The ability to recognise events as causes in this sense gives us mastery (or increased mastery) within the world by enabling us to predict events and using them to our advantage or averting them.

The scientific world, on the other hand, is the world in as much as it is independent of ourselves. The scientist arranges things, not as they affect his or her fortunes, but as they are independent of human agency. The notion of cause here is that of the necessary and sufficient conditions of an hypothetical situation, not of a relationship that has proved useful in the past to observe. Thus, a practical statement such as "It's hot today" is transposed into the scientific idiom by being re-written as "At 12 noon the temperature on the roof of the air ministry was 30°C". The scientific idiom can, in Oakeshott's

sense, be seen to be wider than the area covered by the natural sciences; for to be fully within the remit of the natural sciences statements tend for example, to be about H_2O rather than water. It may be objected here that the distinction between science and practice is unreal, since science is rooted in the human desire for mastery of the natural world. Oakeshott is, however, making a logical, rather than a factual point here.

The fact that a particular project may run together the two issues of 'discovering' scientific laws and the control over the environment that may now be possible (think of the earlier example of the atomic bomb) does not mean that there is no distinction between science and technology. Strictly speaking, the scientist discovers laws and is not interested in changing or circumventing them, even supposing this were to be possible. Indeed, it simply does not follow that knowledge through the discovery of scientific laws gives mastery, since we may lack the technology to construct appropriate devices to use this knowledge, and in some cases, such a device might be impossible to build. For example, we know that the Sun is cooling down, but it is ~~not~~ thought to be the case that this is something we could prevent. Furthermore, the fact that X can be done (where X is something based upon science) says nothing about questions of whether such mastery is desirable or not. The point is that though scientific considerations might play a part in the decision, there is still a distinction to be drawn between the scientific evidence, how it is arrived at and so on, and the practical issues of desirability, consequences and the rest. After all, the fact that blood tests might play a part in determining a paternity suit would not make the judges' decision in such a case a scientific one.

The same three categories are also available to us when we come to look at the past. An important point to note here is that, strictly speaking, the historian does not study the past at all. What is studied, according to Oakeshott is present evidence for past events. This is so in as much as

A fixed and finished past, a past divorced from and uninfluenced by the present, is a past divorced from evidence (for evidence is always present) and is consequently nothing and unknowable.¹⁴

This looks paradoxical, since there is a temptation to say the statement "The battle of Hastings was fought in 1066" is about a battle fought nearly a thousand years ago rather than about documents in an archive. The point Oakeshott is trying to establish is, I believe, that the past is not 'there' for the historian to escape into and rummage around for evidence. It is not like a country that we can visit and then write home about. And if there is only evidence for what happened (and we cannot examine the events for ourselves) then the notion of 'what really happened' must be replaced, according to Oakeshott, by the notion of 'what the evidence obliges us to believe'.¹⁵ This is the only way in which the past can be anything other than an impenetrable world beyond the bounds of the present. In one way this leaves Oakeshott open to the charge of scepticism since we can never 'really' know what happened in the past. This whole way of putting things carries with it the danger of apparent paradox. In the first place, we are offered a past that is present, though according to Oakeshott, not 'merely present'. In as much as history is based upon inferences from present evidence it is a way of ordering

¹⁴ Oakeshott, op cit, 107

¹⁵ Op cit, 108.

our present experience (that of sub specie praeteritorum), not a way of experiencing the past. This has echoes of Croce's dictum that all history is contemporary history, if we take this to mean that history is not a part of reality, but the whole of reality understood sub specie praeteritorum.¹⁶ Thus history is in fact the historian's world of present experience. It is evident from this that a certain tension must arise between the understanding of the past which springs from the historian's understanding of the present and the past as understood by those who were agents at the time when past events were present occurrences, that is to say, the understanding of what they were doing which comes from those who lived in the past. Oakeshott's account of the past is, in this sense, a constructionist one. History is written by historians, not those who lived in the past. In a paper on history and social science,¹⁷ he writes that "History is not made by soldiers and statesmen ... any more than etymology is made by insects"¹⁸. History must be understood from within the framework of contemporary thought. But if this is so, then what is to be made of the way in which people in the past conceived themselves as doing things? Though the evidence for this must be present, and something with which we are capable of being familiar with (in the sense of comprehending its significance) in terms of our present categories, it must be the case that the account offered makes clear the understanding of people in the past and not

¹⁶ Though Oakeshott does reject any equation of his views with those of Croce, Experience and its Modes, 109.

¹⁷ M J Oakeshott, History and Social Science (Institute of Sociology, Playhouse Press, 1936).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 73.

our own. The evidence at the disposal of historians is that of the understanding of events and actions by those whose actions and thoughts they were. In leaving us records of what were present experiences, thoughts and reflections, it is those in the past who make history and not historians. The historian's account is logically limited by what could coherently be asserted about the actions of conscious individuals in the past, and this must (for Oakeshott) be what they took themselves to be doing, since there would otherwise be no history at all; for there can be no facts without judgements, and the judgements must have been those of those conscious individuals in the past. None of this excludes the possibility of interpretation and judgement by the historian of the present evidence, and it is in this sense that history is the historian's creation. My point, however, is merely to note that there is an apparent tension, given Oakeshott's characterisation of fact and judgement, between the parameters of sense (and therefore of possible interpretations) being set by agents in the past on one hand and the view that history must be understood within the framework of contemporary thought on the other. Oakeshott does talk of the historian 'translating' from the idiom of practice to that of history, but the question is, of course, what is involved in this translation and within whose framework it is to be understood.¹⁹

There is also the tension between an agent's experience of an event in a 'real' past and the historian's construction of that past. To repeat, the past is, for Oakeshott, a way of understanding present evidence and as such, can be viewed in the contemplative, scientific and practical idioms that are available to our understanding of the

¹⁹ Translation does after all carry with it the notion of moving from like to like (eg English to French) where approximate content - je ne sais quoi may well be untranslatable - can be conveyed through a logically identical form; rather than moving from one form to another. To 'translate' a religious notion into science might, it could be argued, lose the point altogether.

present. As before, I shall set aside the contemplative attitude, which in this context would be that of the historical novelist. The 'practical' attitude to the past is, analogously with the attitude to the present, that of seeing the past in terms of its usefulness. People often talk of 'learning the lessons of history' and at a more sophisticated level, this attitude is to be found in the way a practising lawyer might look at a will or legal document.²⁰ Oakeshott characterises this attitude, in its more vulgar forms, as reading the past backwards, in other words, how does the past affect our present aims and enterprises. It is seen as the womb which has given birth to our present world, and the information it contains is seen as a fund of facts and the accumulated wisdom of the ages, such that we might look to for help in dealing with our present contingencies. More than that, it is the arena in which we may judge past events as if they affected us. For example, "The summer of 1920 was the finest in my memory", or "King John was a bad king" are both 'practical' judgements, as are, in different ways, statements such as "He died too soon" or "The Pope's intervention changed the course of events".²¹ The scientific attitude is more complex. We saw earlier that it was used to distinguish the world of events which are independent of us. That is to say, events are not useful or useless, they simply are what they are. In this sense it is the opposite of the practical attitude. However, it is important to see that the use of the term scientific can cause confusion here, if we simply equate it with the

²⁰ See Oakeshott's example from Maitland, quoted in Rationalism in Politics, 160.

²¹ Ibid, 148.

methods and practices of the natural sciences. Strictly speaking there cannot be a scientific (in the sense of 'natural science') attitude to the past, for:

The world as it appears in scientific theory is a timeless world, a world, not of actual events, but of hypothetical situations.²²

In other words, the scientist is concerned, not with particular events, but with events in as much as they are susceptible to generalisation, quantification and assimilation under universal laws. Science is concerned with the general, not the particular, or to put in in Oakeshott's terminology, the world conceived sub speciae quantitatis. The historian's attitude to the past is characterised for Oakeshott by none of the attitudes above. If the scientist is concerned with the general, timeless configurations of phenomena there is no room for the particularity of history; if the contemplative or practical person may invoke a response about the past, for the historian there is nothing else - the past always appears in his/her work. And that last remark is a grammatical remark, not an observation of fact. Furthermore, and this is of crucial importance for Oakeshott, the historical past is the past understood for its own sake. In a well known passage, Oakeshott contrasts what he calls 'the attitude of the world' with what he considers to be the attitude of the historian.

'The historian' adores the past; but the world today has perhaps less place for those who love the past than ever before. Indeed, it is determined not to allow events to remove themselves securely into the past; it is determined to keep

²² Ibid, 149.

them alive by a process of artificial respiration or (if need be) to recall them from the dead so that they may deliver their messages. For it wishes only to learn from the past and it constructs a 'living past' which repeats with spurious authority the utterances put into its mouth. But to the 'historian' this is a piece of obscene necromancy: the past he adores is dead. The world has neither respect nor love for what is dead, wishing only to recall it to life again. It deals with the past as with a man, expecting it to talk sense and have something to say apposite to its plebian 'causes' and engagements. But for the 'historian' for whom the past is dead and irreproachable, the past is feminine. He loves it as a mistress of whom he never tires and whom he never expects to talk sense. Once it was religion which stood in the way of the appearance of the 'historical' past: now it is politics; but always it is this practical disposition.²³

The historian then, is distinguished by the fact that the practical disposition is absent from his work, and the historical disposition is found only, though not always, in the work of historians.

It may be worth dwelling on the distinction between the historical attitude on the one hand and those of science and practice on the other, and looking at the arguments involved more closely. In Oakeshott's terminology, the world of history is 'coherent' (which means that it cannot be subsumed into another 'world') but defective (which means that it is an 'arrest' of experience - it is not the perfect reflection of the world of which it speaks). Within the world of history, any and all evidence is relevant, nothing is excluded as non-contributory since events are important for what they show us about the past, and the idea of excluding something as 'unimportant' would presuppose a non-historical view of relevance

²³ Ibid, 166.

and importance. Again, this is a logical point about the way in which historians must be bound by evidence and not a remark on those areas of research that historians may have to rank in order of importance in deciding what work to embark on next (say, sport in 19th century France or the rise of Fascism in Europe). This does not mean that the selection of a period or topic for study is completely unrelated to history, for such a selection will spring from the historians own interests and a care for those questions and problems seen as important within the practice of history. And some historians may choose topics for 'practical' reasons. But this distinguishes history from practice, since practical goals would involve the selection of data in quite a different way. Furthermore, it is also true to say that engagement in the world of practice presupposes that things can be changed, preferably to our advantage. If X is a king then the intervention of the Pope will change the course of events since it will require new strategies and so on to adapt to the new set of circumstances. But in history (and I am not talking here of the possibility of new evidence turning up to change our view of things) the past is fixed. The Pope's intervention did not change the course of events, it was the course of events. If the past, whilst we have evidence for it, is unchangeable then we cannot say that "William II died too soon", he must simply have died when he did. The final group of practical statements that Oakeshoot wants to exclude from history proper, judgements such as "King John was a bad king", are not quite so straightforward. There is clearly a sense in which all the historian can do is relate the actions of the king as we have evidence, but there is another sense in which it does not seem inappropriate to assert that he failed in his aims to curb

the Barons or murdered rivals and so on. Are such judgements bound to be practical in the relevant sense? The answer is, I think, not necessarily, and it is something that I shall put aside in order to return to it later on.

The world of practice is, in this sense, not independent of ourselves. To allude to the issue of moral judgements, the ethical 'I' is a part of the moral world in the way that the scientific 'I' is not part of the phenomena it investigates, not does it appear in experiments. But if history is a study of the world that is independent of the historian, it does ~~not~~ follow, says Oakeshott, that history is called upon to imitate or emulate the ~~methods~~ of the natural sciences. To do so would produce an ignoratio elenchi, for:

... these are abstract and separate worlds of ideas,
different and exclusive modifications of experience ...²⁴

This is precisely where for Oakeshott, social sciences such as sociology and anthropology come to grief, for they attempt to use historical data to produce generalisations that are not historical²⁵. Scientific generalisations are concerned to bring more and more phenomena under a general description or law. Thus the superiority of Einstein's work to that of Newton is in its ability to account for a wider range, whilst still being true of everything covered by Newton's theory. The historian, on the other hand, is interested in this thing or that thing rather than any thing which can be identified, given sufficient

²⁴ Experience and its modes, 165.

²⁵ As Wittgenstein remarked of Freud's methodology, method and problem bypass each other. See Philosophical Investigations, page 232. Strangely, Oakeshott has some sympathy for psychology, see On Human Conduct (Oxford, OUP, 1974), Chapter 1.

criteria, as falling within the phenomenal world of which that law speaks. The historian seeks not for similarities, he or she seeks for dissimilarities between events and explains, not by recourse to wider and wider generalisations, but by providing more detail of a specific event.

To sum up, for Oakeshott the 'grammar' of science, an area which is distinctive precisely because it refers to that which is empirical and general, is incompatible with the 'grammar' of history because of the logical limits of the phenomena it investigates. That is to say, there are some areas of human activity and aspects of human behaviour which are excluded from the area in which terms such as cause and uniformity have sense.²⁶ And, by the same token, there are phenomena in the natural world that are excluded from the area in which the giving of reasons (as opposed to the citing of causes) is appropriate. This is a gap that cannot be bridged, least of all by using the vocabulary of one to describe the contents of the other.

And as far as the distinction between the 'historical' and 'practical' past is concerned, we might sum up by saying that the past understood as history speaks only of itself. It cannot, logically speaking, generate information that will be of use to those in the present; it is fixed, finished and unpenetratable, as impossible as Gatsby's dream.

III

As we have noted, the first series of objections to Oakeshott's characterisation of the independence of history comes from those described (with varying degree of accuracy) as 'positivists'. Their

²⁶ Some writers would contest this, suggesting reasons can be causes. But they are not our concern here, cf Blue and Brown Books, 18.

argument, roughly speaking, is that science provides a model for all genuine explanations; or rather, that there is a paradigm for genuine explanation of which science is the exemplar.

Any explanation must ape, however uncomfortably, the methods of the natural sciences, even if the subject cannot, at present, reach the precision of those sciences. On this view the structure of explanation is subject neutral. In terms of historical explanation, this view is usually expressed under the general category 'covering law theory' and its original and most notable exponent is Professor Hempel. Hempel argues that there are two kinds of covering law - the universal and the statistical/probable. As we saw, in the first case a valid explanation is one which is produced from (i) a general law (ii) a set of initial conditions. Thus the expansion of a volume of gas is explained by recourse to (i) general laws about the behaviour of gases (ii) the heating of a given volume of gas at constant pressure. In the second type of case, according to Hempel "under conditions of a more or less complex kind F, an event, or 'result' G, will occur with statistical probability - ie roughly: with a long-run relative frequency - q: in symbolic notation $ps(G,F) \approx q$. If the probability is close to 1, a law of this type may be invoked to explain occurrence G in a given case where conditions F are realised"²⁷. The upshot of all this for Hempel is

The two kinds of explanation by covering laws have this feature in common: they explain an event by showing that, in view of certain particular circumstances and general laws its occurrence was to be expected (in a purely logical sense), either with deductive certainty or inductive probability.²⁸

²⁷ C G Hempel, *Meaning and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation*, in *Philosophy of History*, P Gardiner (ed.) (London, OUP, 1974), 91.

²⁸ Ibid, 92.

for

Historical explanation, ~~too~~, aims at showing that the event in question was not 'a matter of chance', but was to be expected in view of certain antecedent conditions. The explanation referred to (is) rational scientific explanation which rests on the assumption of general laws.²⁹

Hempel seems to be making two important points. He is arguing that an explanation needs to show why 'this' is opposed to 'that' happened and that an explanation in terms of reasons is in effect to redescribe an action rather than to explain it; for to show that X was reasonable or rational in the circumstances is not to explain it, but to point to grounds that could have been put forward.³⁰ Secondly, he is arguing that talk of reasons as motives for actions does not exclude a causal explanation of the type offered by science, but presupposes such explanations in the form of a general law of some kind. Thus the failure of William I to invade Scotland for the reason that he was uncertain about the loyalty of his nobles presupposes a law-like generalisation of the form "leaders do not invade lands when they are not in control of their own domain, etc."

I should state here that it is irrelevant for the purpose of this argument as to whether historians actually generate any laws or merely consume laws that are 'discovered' by sociologists and psychologists, though there seems to be no reason, in principle, why they should not do so.

The above outline gives rise to two related, though distinct, questions. Are all genuine explanations of the same type? If not, are, as a

²⁹ Ibid, 93.

³⁰ Ibid, 102.

matter of fact, historical explanations anything like scientific ones ? It should be again noted that I am distinguishing here between the thesis that historical explanations can be reduced to causal or scientific explanations and the thesis that they share a common explanatory structure.

At the outset it should be noted that an underlying assumption of the arguments above is that whilst other explanatory activities stand in particular need of justification, science does not do so. Theology, for example, is often introduced as being dependent upon an affirmative answer being given to the question "Does God exist ?" or, for the more philosophically minded "Is the concept of God in order ?" Science is rarely, if ever, introduced as being dependent upon the answer we give to the question "Is the concept of cause in order ?" It is worth reminding ourselves at this point that criteria of logic are not, as Peter Winch points out, direct gifts from God but "arise out of and are only intelligible in, the context of ways of living or modes of social life".³¹ The point Winch is making is that whilst it would be irrational in science to refuse to be bound by the results of a properly conducted experiment, or irrational for a religious believer to pit their strength against that of God, neither science nor religion are rational or irrational; they are both non-logical categories and it is only within them that we can assert of a statement that it is logical or illogical. Mistakes are mistakes within a system, not in the abstract. Thus within each mode of social life (to use Winch's term) there are criteria that are not themselves the

³¹ Winch, op cit, 100-1.

subject of challenge. (This is not to deny that they may be overlaps between different modes.) For example, the uniformity of nature is presupposed by science and makes the rejection of unsatisfactory theories a possibility, it is not something that is demonstrated by science. In this sense science is incapable of external justification, it is only within science that particular results or theories can be justified by appealing to the appropriate criteria.

The assumption being made, that the criteria of science are the criteria for all rational activity may be said to beg the question since it assumes that all other arguments are proto-scientific; as if science was what we had all been trying to do, but have previously failed to achieve.

A general view of this type is expressed by Ian Jarvie when he writes

I should only claim that science is a paradigm of rationality - for us and tout court ... the paradigm of rationality is action taken with full knowledge; the paradigm of full knowledge is scientific knowledge; therefore any action to gain scientific knowledge is at the heart of any idea of rationality.³²

It might also be thought that talk of 'full' knowledge in the abstract, as if all knowledge was of the same type, is equally question begging. People often talk of the growth of knowledge since the 17th century as if it were clear what they meant. Does, for example, a new archaeological discovery, a new proof in mathematics, an undiscovered archive, the average inside leg measurement of British postmen increase the sum of knowledge? And, if so, by how much? Would the disproof of a theory mean that there was more, or less, knowledge? It is surely reasonable to imagine a rational decision being taken without recourse

³² I Jarvie in Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences, ed. Cioffi and Borger (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), 268-9.

to 'full knowledge' in the sense indicated by Jarvie at the start of this chapter. A judge making a decision about a matter which puts the rights of the community against those of the individual by appealing to precedent and case law is acting rationally, but hardly in the terms envisaged by Jarvie.

It is tempting to believe that since science has transformed our world, the scientific method can go on expanding its scope ad infinitum and subsume areas that were previously thought to be distinct. It is this view that underlies the expressed hopes of sociologists and psychologists about their subjects. But as Lichtenburg once remarked

We must not believe that when we make a few more discoveries in this field or that, that this process will just go on for ever. The high jumper jumps better than the farm boy, and one high jumper better than another, but the height that no human can jump over is very small. Just as people find water wherever they dig, man finds the incomprehensible sooner or later.³³

Science, like everything else, has its limitations.³⁴ My argument so far has been that a scientific account cannot be the only and need not be the best account of any given occurrence.

It might, however, still be maintained that although there are no a priori reasons for equating historical models of action with scientific ones, as a matter of fact the two are the same. I mean here that

³³ Quoted in M O'C Drury, The Danger of Words (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 30.

³⁴ The element to which science has become a part of our culture is aptly summed up in the following quotation from the TV critic Clive James, discussing Flash Gordon on the box. "When Flash's pal Dr Zarkov talked nonsense, it sounded like nonsense. When Dr Who talks nonsense, it sounds like science." C James, The Crystal Bucket (London: Cape, 1981), 27.

their character is scientific, not that an empirical investigation has revealed that this is what historians consider themselves to be doing. Indeed, this has to be so since, as far as I am aware, even the strongest proponents of the covering law model admit that few, if any, historians base their work on this approach. This is, I believe, a damaging point against their approach and is seen by some as enough to dismiss it completely. This may be too quick, for even the most brilliant exponents of a subject may be unable to give an adequate philosophical account of what they are doing. Deeply religious people are not always good philosophers of religion, distinguished scientists are often poor philosophers of science and brilliant footballers are not always good commentators on their sport. On the other hand, though the relationship between a practice and its exponents is undoubtedly a complex one, it must be admitted that an account which in no way resembles the practice it is 'describing' is an unconvincing one. Why call it that at all? Thus the response 'so much the worse for historians' who fail to come up to the standard of the covering law model is a little too cavalier in its attitude.

A second response to the way historians write is that the standard of explanation set by the covering law model is an ideal to which they are moving. But an ideal must be of the same form as those attempts to meet it, and that is precisely what is in doubt. Elsewhere, Lichtenburg wrote that 'Materialism is the asymptote of psychology' and this sums up the relationship between the hopes of the covering law theorists and the practice of historians.

I shall now attempt to argue that if we look at the practice of historians, and look at what it is they are trying to explain, then the

covering law account does not really help us; for laws of this sort are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions. Moreover, generalisations which can be made by historians on the basis of their investigations (eg All reformation parliaments were packed) are different in character to scientific generalisations based upon experiment and hypothesis. In doing this I shall meet the two points raised earlier in connection with Professor Hempel about the need for general laws.

The first point to be made is that if scientific explanations were to be brought into historical study, then plainly the notions of cause and of precision in measurement would play an important part in those explanations. But while it may be true to say that there are some elements of human behaviour where such methods are appropriate, it is not true to say that it must be the case for all human behaviour, including some of those areas of most interest to the historian. An analogy with psychology might help here. In 'The Danger of Words'^{34a} Maurice Drury argues that there are two kinds of psychology, labelled (in a manner that Dorothy Parker could scarcely better) A and B. Psychology B is 'scientific' in character, dealing with quantification, expressing itself in such manifestations as Eysenck's Introvert/Extrovert scale and drawing out abstract traits that people share (eg Boswell and Pepys were both 'extroverts'). Now clearly there may be a place for measurement of this kind in psychology (for example, measuring the performance of young children in learning manipulative skills or verbal ones) as there may be room for quantitative information in history (the number of cattle in 13th century Palestine may tell us about Crusader society). However, as Drury points out, there is also room for psychology A. This, for Drury, has nothing to do with measurement,

^{34a} M. O'C. Drury, The Daughter of Words, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973)

nor the 'science of behaviour'. It rests on insight and intuition. In this sense, the great novelists such as Jane Austen, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are psychologists because they have penetrating insights into human emotions, weaknesses and behaviour. Drury quotes a letter from Simone Weil to one of her pupils which shows precisely that understanding of another human being. The importance of this for Drury is that it deals with something that is immeasurable. Qualities such as love, kindness, goodness and so on cannot be measured like the reactions of a child. Moreover, the subject is an individual, not people in general. A scientist might be interested in any piece of chalk, not a particular bit, but this attitude, transferred to humans would only lead to shallowness of understanding. To say that Boswell and Pepys share an abstract trait on the Eysenck scale is neither of interest to us, nor especially important. Two things follow from this. Firstly that psychology A cannot be replaced by psychology B because the aspects of human behaviour we have been dealing with cannot be measured more accurately, since they cannot be measured, in that sense, at all. Secondly, the historian is, in some aspects of work, interested in precisely those immeasurable qualities which would be trivialised and misunderstood if they were thought to be amenable to measurement. Greater precision cannot be achieved.

The language of history, just like our everyday talk is littered with examples of the term 'cause'. But are historical causes like scientific causes in every case? In some cases an historical narrative may well take note of something that might be explained in terms of causation that would be appropriate to a scientist. For example, the course of the Black Death during the 14th century was caused by rats carrying a

certain bacillus, the Lisbon earthquake in 1759 was caused by pressure under the earth's crust and faults in the rocks around the city, or whatever. However, it does not follow that all historical causes must be understood in this sense. People act for reasons as well as causes. The antecedent conditions of human actions do not, in this sense, form an homogeneous entity. Dispositions, to use Ryle's phrase, such as fear, jealousy, the desire for revenge, religious belief and moral commitment are not reducible to certain necessary or essential conditions. A person's anger or jealousy may take the form of writing a poison pen letter or kicking the dog, keeping a stony silence or shouting at someone. Intentions, motives and beliefs, all of which are crucial to historical explanation are not objects in the world and cannot, therefore, logically be the object of scientific investigation and explanation. Beliefs, for example, are not caused, nor do they act as caused in the way that gas igniting causes an explosion. They do not, in that sense, have a duration or a spatial location. It would surely be absurd to say "As I was believing in God, the 'phone interrupted me" or to ask "Where do you believe in God?" To say that X did Y because he believed p is to assert a logical relationship between them, not simply to observe a chronological succession of events.³⁵

This brings us to a second difficulty for the notion of cause in explaining human behaviour. To say that A is the cause of B, we must be able to separate them, otherwise B might be part of A. But could we do this with a person's beliefs? As we have noted Marx's talk of social being determining consciousness in his 1859 preface exhibits the confusion I am referring to. Though it is tempting to say that a person's "middle-classness" causes their Liberalism, it

³⁵ See Chapter 1.

is hard to imagine a satisfactory exposition of "middle-classness" that did not mention a person's beliefs and hence that very liberalism. Hempel, and others, might disagree here, and claim that there is nothing in principle that prevents a causal explanation of an action. Without going into details, it seems that there is a further argument against this position, namely that the meaning of an action (or utterance) such as a warning or greeting is not something that can be conveyed by a purely causal explanation: for we would not only need to understand the meaning of a phrase but also to understand what saying something like that (with that meaning) would mean in a given situation. A causal explanation might be able to give us the bodily movements of X but the fact that we can give the conditions (in a causal sense) for an action taking place, we cannot give a causal account of the feature of that action which makes it an action of warning as opposed to one of greeting, or a practical joke. The difference is expressed by Wittgenstein³⁶ as the difference between me raising my arm and my arm going up. Agency in the first sense is not a natural phenomena.

There are then, limits to a scientific account of human actions which prevent history being reduced to scientific inquiry (a thesis which may have consequences for the social sciences). But what of the argument that the structure of argument is the same in history and in science ?

The first point to be made here is that the 'general' laws unveiled by those who favour this argument are often rather vague and trivial (in

³⁶ Philosophical Investigations, paras 612ff.

the sense that they do not have a wide explanatory span). In short, a general law that looks as if it might explain a great deal (for example, Popper's law from the sociology of military power "Big armies will defeat small armies if they are both equally well led and have parity in weapons") suffers from a great number of counter examples which require further and further modification to the generalisation. At the extreme, we could imagine a 'law' which only explained one battle! The point of this is to note how the move is not, as in science, towards bringing more and more identifiable phenomena under a general law, but towards making more and more distinctions between individual battles which bring out their particular course and consequences. Indeed this would have to be so, for if there were no relevant differences between the battle of Agincourt and the battle of Lutzen, then how could we usefully distinguish between them? It would surely be absurd to say that what really interested us here was that two smaller armies defeated two larger ones. What interests us is the whole range of different circumstances that surrounded them. Now it is, of course, true to say there may be common features between two battles in terms of tactics, weapons, and so on and that it may be useful in discussing, say, the battle of Agincourt to draw parallels with the battle of Crecy. But this is not the same thing as bringing two identifiable phenomena under a law; rather it is laying two events side by side (and it is worth remembering that the differences interest historians as much as the similarities).

The problems above are related to the difficulty involved in specifying the antecedent conditions of an historical event, in the way that these can be isolated in a scientific experiment. Science does not tell us what is the case but what will be the case under conditions

$T_0 - T_6$. It is difficult to see how, in history, we could isolate the relevant factors; that is, make sure that only conditions $T_0 - T_6$ and that $T_a - T_p$ are not present as well. In short, that the two are the same. And as we have noted, if we could show that two events were the same then there would be a further difficulty; for if the Russian Revolution had had the same antecedent conditions as the French Revolution it would have been ... the French Revolution ! We would then be left with the problem of distinguishing between them, something that is surely relevant to historical inquiry. If this sameness could be achieved, it would be useless for history. It might be worth adding here that part of the point of scientific laws is that they enable us to predict (and are confirmed or falsified by their success) events in the area of which they speak. It is not, however, clear that anything like this happens in history. Firstly, because we know what has happened and cannot therefore, test our hypothesis in this way and secondly because the multitude of conditions surrounding each event make it impossible to ensure that the causes and effects are only within that closed class of which our law is meant to explain.

It might be argued here that we are talking of probability only. But two further difficulties arise. If it is a matter of probability (no matter how close to 1) then something else could have happened or caused X to happen. In that case, we are left with the question posed by Hempel why this and not that ? Secondly, imagine that we want to find out about Edinburgh University and are using some general observations about British Universities to help us. How would this be of use ? If Edinburgh is part of our original sample then we do not need the rest (it would be absurd for the general conclusion to

contradict what we know of the particular we are interested in, since it cannot be more accurate than that which we already know about Edinburgh. If Edinburgh is not part of the sample, then how do we know (if the conclusion is only probable) that it is the same? We would then have to look at it, in which case the general theory becomes redundant again. A general theory might have heuristic value, but that is a different matter. If someone were then to argue that such a theory could 'fill in' where there was no positive evidence, then this would run contrary to historical practice. Historians might develop an explanation which links together scattered evidence (as any study of the early middle ages will show) but they would never substitute abstraction for evidence. If we not know why William I failed to invade Scotland (that is, there is no evidence) then any number of theories would be on an identical logical footing, and the first duty of the historian would be to find evidence, not construct a theory.

The earlier discussion of theories leads to a final point against the identification of science and history as similar types of inquiry. This is connected to the question of how a scientist stands in relation to the phenomena he/she investigates as opposed to how an historian stands in relation to other societies. As Peter Winch points out,³⁷ the concept of gravity does not belong to a falling apple, but to the scientist's account of such an occurrence. The criteria for scientific explanations belong to the scientist, or at least to the scientific community. However (pace Popper and

³⁷ Op cit, 127-8.

Oakeshott) the concept of war (which might be invoked to explain certain events in the past) does not belong to the observer (in this case, the historian) but to the conflicting societies themselves.

Winch's discussion brings in another important and related point. For the scientist it is his/her grasp of the theory (of gravity) which enables him/her to understand what is happening and to bring together related phenomena under that law. But for the historian it is only to the extent to which we independently understand the different situations (various battles, say) and their significance that we are in the position to call them the same thing. In science, understanding the theory makes it possible to understand individual phenomena, in history it is only our understanding of the individual events that enables us to be in a position to relate them at all. The two processes are almost exactly the opposite.

Finally, a remark about Hempel's suggestion that an account offering reasons for actions is not a genuine explanation, but only a redescription. To show that X is rational is still not to say why it (as opposed to anything else) was done.³⁸ What is being said, however, is that to cite a reason (X intended to do Y) is not only to say that Y was rational but to explain the action by giving the point of that action. To use an example of Skinner³⁹ a policeman uttering a warning to a skater not only means something by the words he utters, but means something by uttering them. That is to say, he intends to warn the skaters (rather than play a joke on them) and recovering this intention

³⁸ See Cardiner, op cit, 102.

³⁹ B. F. Skinner, 'Social Meaning' and the Explanation of Social Action, in Cardiner, Philosophy of History, 106-27.

explains the action in the relevant sense by explaining its point. Following J L Austin, Skinner terms this the illocutury force of a statement, and though this side of matters does not concern us, we can see that a non-causal explanation is quite adequate in these circumstances. (The first chapter indicates where I disagree with Skinner on the usefulness of this concept.)

IV

Assuming that the above arguments are correct, history is a distinct method of inquiry from science. This now leaves the question of the relationship between history and, what Oakeshott terms, 'the world of practice'. It seems, moreover, that acceptance of the previous section cuts us off from at least one avenue for distinguishing between history and practice; for if history could be 'scientific' in some sense then it ought automatically to be capable of becoming ~~too~~ objective and dispassionate enquiry. There are three related issues at stake in this section. We need to see if it is possible for the historian to be interested in the past for its own sake, to see if this can be done without lapsing into the language of practice and to see (bearing in mind one of the criticisms of the covering law theorists) whether this bears any relationship to the way historians actually write.

The case that moral, religious or political language must enter into the work of historians is a powerful one. Though it is accepted that the historian should not be the partisan supporter of a cause or nation, it is undoubtedly true, as Professor Walsh argues, that the activities of other people ~~often~~ interest us in the same way that the activities of foreigners might concern us, even though we are unable

to influence them in any way.⁴⁰ Furthermore, since the historian does know the results of what happened in the past, there is nothing wrong, in principle, with reading the past in terms of its subsequent developments and how they affect us. Finally, says Walsh, because the past is about people, there is a difficulty in not taking sides (unlike science) for in as much as the historian analyses and tells a story, his/her position must be that of a narrator with preconceptions, presuppositions and so on. This last point can be taken two ways. It can be seen as a psychological remark about historians or a logical remark about the nature of experience. Just as there can be no 'raw' data or 'blank' mind so everyone must bring preconceptions to their understanding of the past (in Ryle's phrase, 'theory-laden') and, it might be argued these preconceptions must be of a political, moral or even ideological nature.

The historian is not, so the argument goes, an impartial or neutral observer of events and this shows itself in the actual practice of history writing. In some cases values will be implicit within narrative accounts of the past. This may take the form of certain moral principles being unstated, though applied, within a work or it may take the form of implicitly rejecting a way of understanding the past (for example, seeing history as what 'great men' do, rather than as the interaction of 'social forces'). Thus a Marxist historian might accuse a Liberal of implicit bias where the latter talks of the actions of statesmen and the importance of treaties in a description of the outbreak of the Great War, rather than talking

⁴⁰ A point raised by Professor Walsh in a seminar.

about class and the declining rate of profit. Values may also be explicit, in the sense of judgements either on particular individuals or events. In a paper entitled 'Moral Judgements in History and History Teaching', Ann Low-Beer⁴¹ gives some examples

George I ff not the worst, was perhaps the least
generally attractive of monarchs⁴²

On Gladstone's foreign policy

In the harsh Bismarkian age he stood for the humaner liberalism of the mid nineteenth century; and the value of that attitude can be appreciated today when we see to what Bismarkianism led.⁴³

And finally a longer quotation in which the moral judgement is woven into the narrative, rather than standing as an individual comment.

For twenty years Charles of Anjou dominated the Mediterranean stage. He had shown himself to be one of the great statesmen of his time ... But he died a failure. His personal assets were many. He was bold, imperturbable, vigorous and unsparing of himself, ... he was a competent soldier and administrator. His piety was sincere ... But these assets were not sufficient for the role he chose to play. He failed as a man. There was no kindness in his nature, no pity nor any imaginative sympathy. His personal ambition was too crude and obvious. His piety was its servant ... He was a man of honour according to his lights, but they were narrow and selfish lights. Men could admire him.... But few of them loved him. It was the lack of human understanding that was his downfall. His human weaknesses were a certain vanity ... and a certain excess of confidence that as the years went by led him to underrate his enemies. Finally and fatally, it was beyond his comprehension that the Sicilians should so care for

⁴¹ A Low-Beer, in Studies in the Nature and Teaching of History (Eds. W Burston & D Thompson) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 137-59.

⁴² Ibid, 139.

⁴³ Ibid, 153.

their freedom that they would rise against the most powerful prince of the age.⁴⁴

The point being made by Ann Low-Beer is that it is difficult, not to say impossible, to imagine any credible historical narrative in which such terms could be eschewed completely. Citing Berlin⁴⁵ she goes on to say "History is written in everyday language, the language of ordinary speech, which is shot through with evaluative notions. Only a severely technical language can escape these general, often loose, moral connotations implied in our everyday speech. And, as Berlin points out, it is impossible to conceive of description of people and actions, of narrative or story, in some entirely neutral technical language."⁴⁶ She then goes on to make the point that many ordinary descriptive terms have an evaluative element; does the historian for example, call an event a 'massacre' resulting from 'religious persecutuim' or should he/she try and find a neutral term such as 'killing', the difficulty being that killing is not a synonym for massacre ?

There are several important points raised by the above discussion - relating to both the objectivity and neutrality of history. But before discussing these issues fully, I want to try and clear up one problem which is central to our understanding of history as an activity - that of the relationship between a subject and its practitioners.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 149.

⁴⁵ Sir I Berlin, Historical Inevitability in his Four Essays on Liberty, (London: OUP, 1969).

⁴⁶ Op cit, 140.

One way of getting to grips with this problem is to return to Oakeshott's writings and ask if he is offering a characterisation of history that is a priori or a posteriori. At times it looks as if he is offering us the latter. In 'On the Activity of Being an Historian' he tells us that there are no necessary or sufficient conditions for history, and that history is 'what it has become'.⁴⁷ The analogy used is that it has emerged like a game played by children, starting off in a rough and undisciplined way and only later acquiring a firm or specific character. This character is something found only, though not always, in the works of historians. A comparison that suggests itself is with Wittgenstein's injunction in the 'Philosophical Investigations' to look and see how a word is used if we want to know what it means. History is what historians do (though this does not mean that particular historians cannot be mistaken) and the logic of historical writing becomes clear from examples of that craft, in the same way that the logic of praying becomes clear from looking at actual prayers.

As has already been suggested, this position does seem to differ in some respects from that outlined in 'Experience and its Modes', and in other of Oakeshott's earlier writings. A clear example of this comes in a review of Professor Walsh's 'Introduction to Philosophy of History', where he dismisses that author's appeal to historians as begging the question.⁴⁸ If, to use an example of my own and not Oakeshott, all historians started to dig roads or make paper aero-

⁴⁷ Rationalism in Politics, 137.

⁴⁸ In the Philosophical Quarterly, vol 2, 1952, 276-7.

planes, we would not say 'that is what history has become'; rather we would say that history was no longer being written at all. The implication here is that there is an external standard against which the writings of historians should be judged. In 'Experience and Its Modes' this standard is the coherence of the world of history as a possible manner of understanding experience. The fact that historians are prone to disagree about what they are doing (if they care to give an account at all) leads Oakeshott to suggest that the only alternative to linguistic anarchy and a multitude of competing uses is a discipline that is capable of internal coherence in the form of rules that are independent of historians. In short, we can have either an arbitrary head count of historians or a coherent world of ideas which can, on the basis of its own (necessary) presuppositions, resist the intrusion of the non-historical in all its forms.

To say that this gives the impression of a logical structure 'out there' in some crystalline form is, no doubt, to put things too crudely, but Oakeshott must (it seems) hold that such a world is there irrespective of what any or all historians do. In this respect his earlier position is more akin to that of the 'Tractatus' and the search for an underlying logical form. The emergence of history as a specific activity is to do with the 'discovery' of these latent possibilities rather than the development of logic through a practice. History must, in this sense, be logically complete as a coherent enterprise before the first historian puts pen to paper or quill to parchment. If this is so, then it is difficult to reconcile this with Oakeshott's later view that history is 'what it has become'. Each way has its difficulties. Either we seem to be offering no solution to differences between historians, or we cannot, apparently,

link the logic of history to the practice of historians at all. Two points are worth making here. Firstly, the question of coherence. There is a well known story that Russell, on finding an apparently insoluble contradiction in one of his theories, wrote to Frege and received the reply "Arithmetic is tottering". The plain implication being that if the very foundations of mathematics were flawed by contradiction then the whole edifice of mathematical reasoning must collapse along with it. Not only, thought Russell, would we no longer be justified in trusting mathematics, but universal scepticism would be inescapable. Analogously, it might be supposed that if two of Oakeshott's postulates of historical inquiry were found to contradict one another, then history would also be "tottering". On the face of it, this seems an odd conclusion. How, we might ask can a contradiction in set theory destroy the certainty of an arithmetical proposition such as $2 + 2 = 4$? In a similar way, if two of Oakeshott's postulates were contradictory, would this mean that there had never been a coherent historical statement ? Wittgenstein reminds us that generating a valid inference is related to the question of following a rule. But a rule, he argues, and its application are not something to be grasped in abstracting; we need to see how the rule is applied in an actual practice

Not only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loopholes open, and the practice has to speak for itself.⁴⁹

The rule exists in the actual practice and cannot exist apart from such a practice. A formula can, for example, be taken in a variety of

⁴⁹ L Wittgenstein, On Certainty (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), para 139.

ways - like a sign-post, or series of chalk marks, there is no one way of interpreting them, that is something that arises out of the practice itself.⁵⁰ Two points are being made here. Firstly, history does not have to be logically complete in the sense of the term indicated above, ((In one sense any activity is always logically complete - it is what it is - though it may not be logically coherent)) before any valid historical statements can be made; all that matters is that a particular inference is valid in that case. Secondly, the rules of a discipline are not independent of the practice of that discipline, but show themselves in that practice. In this sense, a contradiction is only a contradiction when it arises and how we resolve that contradiction may involve many things, 'sealing it off', adopting a new convention and so on, none of which necessarily involve the wholesale restructuring of the activity in question. This would seem to leave us with the problem referred to earlier of 'begging the question'. Which historians, Oakeshott might ask, would you choose, and what if they all took up another? If any particular historian can be wrong, why (logically) can't they all be wrong? It does not follow, of course, that the move from a particular to a general proposition is valid in this way. For example, a particular statement can be false, but not all statements can be so. In a similar way, although a memory may be false, not all memories can be so, otherwise the distinction the question tries to exploit would collapse. Thus, with history, it is only because there is a general consensus of reactions and standards that arise from an established way of doing things that we are in a position

⁵⁰ Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, paras 85-87.

to decide that X isn't writing history. 'The practice speaks for itself'. Wittgenstein puts the general point like this (following Winch I have reversed the order of the paragraphs to make them clearer)

242 If language is to be a form of communication there must be agreement, not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements. This may seem to abolish logic, but does not do so - It is one thing to describe methods of measurement and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain consistency in results of measurement.

241 "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language that they use. That is not agreement in opinions, but in a form of life.⁵¹

This is a general epistemological point and we must be clear about what is being claimed. Wittgenstein is not saying that what is true or false is determined by whether such judgements accord with those of others, not that we base our judgements on what we observe other people doing. Rather, that there must be agreement in what he calls a form of life for (in our case) historical judgements to be intelligible at all. Agreement in definitions is logically prior to agreement in judgements. In claiming that history is being written only when certain preconditions are satisfied, without reference to the practice of history itself, Oakeshott is elevating one set of conditions above others without any apparent justification. Having argued that we need to look at the practice of historians, we must now turn and look at the account offered by Ann Low-Beer above,

⁵¹ Ibid, page 88.

and discuss the place of 'practical' judgements (in the Oakeshottian sense) in history.

The issue of partiality in selection of topics has already been discussed and need not detain us further. Suffice it to say that we can see that subjectivity in selecting a question does not imply subjectivity in the answer that we give.

The question of objectivity and neutrality in history has two dimensions to it, the logical and the practical. The first dimension is about what we mean by saying that a work of history is 'objective' as opposed to 'subjective', or 'neutral' as opposed to 'partisan'. The second is to do with how far historians meet those standards, and is, strictly speaking, outside of the concerns of this thesis since it is our task to investigate logic rather than performance. How far, and in what way, can history be objective? The first point that needs to be made is to reject an all-embracing scepticism about the possibility of objectivity that might be offered by those of an ideological disposition. Under this argument we bring 'values' or 'theories' to everything - either explicitly or, more usually, implicitly - and make judgements on the basis of these unchallenged 'assumptions'. If this is intended as a logical remark about the possibility of experience (that is to say facts must be understood within some framework of thought in order to be facts at all) then it simply proves far too much. For, if this is the case then there can be no such thing as an objective judgement (since every judgement will involve some 'theory' or whatever) and it is surely absurd to criticise history for its lack of objectivity when this is something it could never achieve!

Clearly, the discussion must focus around another way of looking at things, and following from the argument above, accept that accusations

of subjectivity or bias depend upon the acceptance of standards of objectivity. In history, this is bound up with the concept of evidence and the limits we may legitimately place on what any particular piece of evidence shows. This means that the concept of objectivity in history (in the sense of agreed criteria, or at least agreement over what would count as criteria) is not incompatible with selecting or interpreting, since we can always ask the question "Does Elton make out his case?" and expect a reasoned justification for ignoring certain documents or another interpretation. The possibility of historical facts is not undermined by the existence in historical works of places where either opinions or judgements are offered. For example, when Pollard and Elton disagree about the role of Cromwell in the reign of Henry VIII there are places where they offer evidence which is automatically accepted or beyond doubt and others where they offer questionable evidence or an interpretation that is open to disagreement. It also means that the concept of objectivity is not disturbed by the possibility of disagreement amongst historians (provided that their disagreement is something that has some reference to evidence) nor by the fact that the evidence can first point one way and then the other, with no apparently final solution in sight. A good example of this is the debate between Tawney, Trevor-Roper and others on the role of the gentry in seventeenth century England. It is often tempting to try and seek an unassailable certainty for a subject or discipline and to think that if that standard cannot be reached then there is nothing other than prejudice and opinion. An analogy is with the position of those philosophers who continue to be worried by the failure of inductive reasoning to live up to the certainty that deductive reasoning apparently gives. My point is

that the lack of such a standard is based upon the false notion that a certain type of reasoning is reasoning par excellence and that all reasoning must meet that standard. In the case of induction we need to remind ourselves that it is not an inferior kind of deduction and in the case of history we need to remind ourselves that getting at the truth does not mean truth in some general or abstract sense but, quite simply, assembling all the relevant details on the basis of the evidence we have and presenting them in such a form that rational agreement or dispute is possible. Thus we can embrace an Oakeshottian scepticism about never being able to get at the past and still maintain that history is objective and rational.

It is a fact, often lost sight of, that there is a large measure of agreement amongst historians and that bias or partisanship in history are something that we can clearly recognise in a work.

But even if we accept that the question of objectivity can be put aside - that is to say the logical principles which might form the basis of objective as opposed to arbitrary or subjective judgements can be made clear (as opposed to the fact that some issues, because of lack of evidence or conflicting evidence, will at any given time be irresolvable between rival historians) - that of neutrality cannot. We cannot, apparently, avoid judgements of value in the language we use to describe events. This does not mean that such judgements would be subjective, in the sense understood above, for they would be capable of defence in terms appropriate to historical discussion and might, of course, turn out to be false. Rather, it seems to imply that we cannot just describe an event, we must judge it in terms which, as part of 'ordinary language' will be the same as those used for our ordinary moral or political talk. Hence success, failure and bad kings and the rest are all legitimate historical uses.

This issue might be said to affect the matter of objectivity indirectly, since if historians can come from different (non neutral) frameworks then on what basis can they disagree or agree ? This issue will be taken up in the last chapter.

This whole area does not seem, to me at least, to be one where cut and dried distinctions can be made in all cases. One of the overall difficulties in Oakeshott's account is that he makes out and dried distinctions when the whole issue is far more complex and the boundaries are far less firm than he imagines. This latter point is one made with great force by Wittgenstein in his later writings and in particular in the 'Philosophical Investigations'. An important notion introduced in the 'Investigations' is that of a language game, and though the term has been devalued by much sloppy usage and inappropriate citation, it has a part to play here.

Philosophers often talk about something called 'ordinary language', which people called 'we', speak. One point that Wittgenstein seeks to establish in the 'Investigations' is that language is used in many different ways and in relation to many different activities (praising, warning, describing, reporting, etc, etc). There is, he argues no essence to these uses, but that they are related - a complicated network that criss-crosses and overlaps.⁵² Different assertions, which on the surface appear quite similar, do not always belong to the same 'game'. For example, "The letter is in the post-box" and "The pain is in my head" are quite different 'games'. I should point out here that 'games' in this sense do not always correspond to

⁵²Op cit, para 67.

activities. To use the example above, these could belong to the same activity - the doctor's diagnosis, based upon my claim "The pain, etc." could be followed by me posting a sick-note to work. The same word may, then, have a different use in a different language game. What I wish to suggest is that history and morality or ideology are different 'language games' and that we cannot assume that words used in one simply transfer their meaning when used in the other. This is not to deny that we cannot make moral judgements about the past, but that this belongs to a different area. In other words, evaluation in the historical sense need not entail evaluation in any moral or political (or indeed ideological) sense.

It is the apparent failure to see this that leads Oakeshott, mistakenly in my view, to attempt to exclude such terms as cause, failure and so on from 'history proper'. To use another analogy of Wittgenstein's he is paying too much attention to the 'surface grammar' of the concepts involved and not enough to their 'depth grammar'.⁵³ To say that X causes Y may be to make a connection of a Humean kind about forces, but it need not do so. To say that the invasion of Belgium by Germany was the immediate cause of the Great War is a perfectly respectable usage that only the most arbitrary linguistic legislation could say must be a scientific or practical term. There may actually be a place for a scientific causal connection within an historical narrative (his death was caused by Bubonic Plague), though the point of causal talk would be different here, since we would be interested in the effect of X's death on subsequent events, or merely the fact of X's death.

⁵³ Ibid, para 664.

The same general point can be made in relation to such terms as failure and accident. It is not that these terms are, per se, illegitimate but that the purpose of using them in practical, as opposed to historical writing is different. Harold Godwin, for example, failed to win the battle of Hastings, William died by accident when his horse threw him. In practical talk such statements refer to a world of other possibilities. Harold could have won, William might have survived and so on; one contingent event occurred rather than any other. But for the historian, failure and accident do not speak of possibility in this sense, there is only what happened, Harold lost and William died. To say that Harold failed at Hastings is not to usurp the language of practice but to use a term in a different, though related way. One way of putting the point might be to say that though there can be failures and bad kings in history, there are no such things for history. As we have seen, the point of describing something as a failure depends upon the logical possibility of success and whilst this is perfectly possible in the world of practice, it is impossible within history since things are (in the relevant sense) unalterable and the alternative is not, therefore a logically possible object of historical inquiry.

This last point is related to a distinction worth making between 'value judgements' in the subject matter of history and 'value judgements' in the historian's treatment of that subject matter. Documents, diaries, newspapers and all the other written evidence we have for the past are written in the practical idiom. They show bias, prejudice, ignorance of a wider perspective and so on. Anyone who has read the 'Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa'⁵⁴ will have no difficulty in

⁵⁴ Written by Frederick's uncle, Bishop Otto of Freising.

recognising this description. But the historian, unlike the eighth century chronicler Nennius does not merely 'make a heap of what I have found'. It is the task of the historian to judge the material, assess it in the light of other evidence and to place it in the context of a coherent account of, say, the Third Crusade, twelfth century Germany, or whatever particular aspect of Barbarossa's career that interests him. But the method of evaluation and the force of the terms used is different from that of the subject matter, for the point of the activity is different. The author of the 'Deeds', Bishop N, wanted to support his nephew's political career, the historian wants to find out what happened (including whether or not the 'Deeds' are accurate).

Part of the difficulty in failing to see the disjunction between the two 'language games' is due to our concentration on 'political' or 'social' history areas where we have (possibly) strong opinions in everyday life. But if, for a moment, we consider the history of science, or of music, art or even philosophy it is easier to see the difference between, in this case the historian's evaluation in describing the story of Lavoisier and the discovery (if that is the right word) of oxygen and a scientist's evaluation of the correctness of the theories advanced, which approximates to the historian's description of a political event and a moral evaluation of it. It is easy to see that the scientific evaluation belongs to another game, but not so easy to see that the same is true of the moral or political evaluation.

At this point someone might be inclined to say "I admit that the historian is in the business of trying to construct as objective account

as is possible given the material he/she works with and that this will certainly involve challenging and criticising contemporary accounts where they are biased. But in offering an account of, say, the events in Paris in 1572 the historian either has to accept those contemporary accounts that describe the 'Massacre' in Paris, or to offer an alternative term which imply a different moral judgement."

The answer must be, not necessarily, Both Berlin and Ann Low-Beer talk about a technical language, as if such a language (like some computer programmes) would weed out certain words and only deploy 'factual' ones. My point is that words like massacre, persecution and so need not be understood in a moral way. Indeed the Oxford English Dictionary has as one definition of massacre "utter defeat or destruction" and defines one use of persecution as "subject to penalties on grounds of religious or political beliefs". Perhaps this will be clearer if we try and examine what makes a moral judgement a moral judgement.

Plainly this is not a matter of words carrying a moral 'load' wherever they go. To say that Alexis Arguello 'murdered' Jim Watt in a fight, or to describe a run-out in cricket as 'suicidal' carries no moral weight at all, though it is, of course, evaluative. What makes a moral judgement moral is the context in which it is offered. In some cases, a moral judgement for one person will be amoral for another. For example, the term suicide might be used as a purely factual description of a death, but if a Roman Catholic were to so describe a death then that description would entail a moral judgement, since suicide is one of the ways that a Catholic can do wrong; in this example the situation might pose a dilemma for the Catholic that would not exist for another person.

In this sense, drawing attention to a moral judgement is not pointing out a feature or minor detail of language "Look, there is a moral term" but rather it is drawing attention to a particular whole within which moral language can operate. My argument in relation to history, and value judgements in that subject is similar, we should not look for a fact here or a biased piece of reporting there, but look at the tone of the whole, see that the emphasis is placed upon some aspects rather than others. The point of the activity is a different one. The historian may or may not like certain things that have happened in the past (the Highland clearances or the shipping of Cossacks who fought for Hitler back to the USSR) but the task is to recount what happened and why it happened and in this context, to say that Eden lied to the Cossacks or the Highlanders were treated brutally is fair comment which does not necessarily involve any more, political or ideological stance at all. Rather it implies a judgement of a different sort. On the other hand, the person seeking to look at the past morally (and we all do this at times) seeks not just to understand what happened and why, but to assess the significance of those facts in terms of notions such as 'decency', 'justice', 'evil' and so on.

A clear example of the use of the past in this way is given in the writings of those usually described as 'Whigs'. Though we are capable of assessing some of their writings in terms of historical standards of accuracy and so on, the purpose of the writing and the way in which they see the past quite clearly has another intention behind it. Butterfield is quite correct to suggest that they substitute the genuine historical question "How did religious liberty come about?" with the altogether different question "To whom should

we be grateful for religious liberty?"⁵⁵ But the objection to them is not only that they praise and condemn on the basis of present dispositions (rather than to try and understand why people behaved in that way at all), but that they also see the past in a quite unacceptable manner to historians. For example, the discovery by Bishop Stubbs of Victorian liberal democracy in the baggage carried over by the Angles and Saxons, in Magna Carta and other unlikely places involves a large number of mistakes about understanding the past as history,⁵⁶ for it involves seeing the past in an anachronistic way. The historian could attack Stubbs either for imputing beliefs and opinions that the Saxons could not (logically) have held or disagree with his interpretation of documents and other evidence on factual grounds.

V

The above arguments have attempted to show that there are indeed a variety of ways in which we can understand the past, some of which are concerned to illuminate events which took place in the past, some of which are intended to illuminate our present experience. Context is all important here; we have to see where and how talk of the past fits into a wider framework, if at all. When Richard Cobb tells us the condition of France at the time of the revolution⁵⁷ that is one thing, when Paine tells us that this is because the pre-revolutionary political order denied fundamental needs of human nature, that is quite another.

⁵⁵ See H Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London: G Bell and Sons, 1931).

⁵⁶ Skinner's article, Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas is excellent on this.

⁵⁷ see R Cobb, Paris and its Provinces 1792-1802, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), or R Cobb, Les Armées Révolutionnaires: Instrument de la terreur dans les départements (Paris: Mouton, 1961).

If it can be shown that all attempts to look at the past need not be of the same sort, and need not be covertly ideological, then we can now look at what is particular about the way in which ideological traditions of thought have looked at the past. It would, of course, be a great mistake just to say that there are historical and practical ways of looking at the past and to lump all 'practical' understandings together without any further analysis or investigation. As we shall see later on, though the religious believer and the ideologist both share a 'practical' interest in the past, and both believe that the past has a special significance in terms of directing present actions, it by no means follows that religion and ideology can be seen as identical enterprises. Too often the category 'practical' is used as a bucket into which the rejected candidates for the appellation 'disciplines' or 'genuine knowledge' are thrown, rather as A J Ayer and others tried to put theology, ethics and almost everything outside of logic and science into a vast bran tub of pseudo-intellectual chaff. My intention in the following three chapters is to look at the ways in which the past is used in ideological thought and to then make the contrast between ideological thought and other examples of 'practical' (or at least, non-academic) thought. Before doing so it may be worth making a few general observations. Firstly, as has been suggested, the past is important in ideological thought because it helps to make clear what ought to be done in the present. This prescriptive force will be different within particular ideologies in the sense that it will be based upon a different key to the situation. For example, a Marxist will act in accordance to furthering the class struggle, whereas a Conservative might act in order to preserve a traditional liberty. Both will, however, draw inspiration from the past. The Marxist will

see the evidence for the inevitability of proletarian victory and the Conservative will draw comfort from the disasters that have befallen those who have put their faith in revolutionary change. As the former draws strength from Marx's assertion that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles",⁵⁸ so the latter draws comfort from Burke's belief that "People will not look forward to posterity who do not look back to their ancestors".⁵⁹ The same is true of other ideologies, some of which will not be dealt with here. Nationalists, whether in Scotland or in Israel, look back to a nationhood that has been destroyed and must be restored. Feminists look back to the way in which men have exploited women and Liberals look back to the progress from ignorance to knowledge. All draw strength from the fact that understood in a certain way, everything in the past contributes to their picture of the world, nothing is irrelevant or excluded. In this sense the facts about the past are special, and achieve a coherence that would otherwise be denied. It is clear from this that not everyone has an ideological understanding of the past, even if they do make moral or political judgements on the basis of information drawn from the past. The person who finds the dropping of the atomic bomb or the persecutions of French Protestants in the seventeenth century abhorrent need have no ideological axe to grind. The person who sees the former as part of the strategy of post war Imperialism and the latter as part of the battle between reason and superstition, does. Locating the significance of events through a 'key' such as 'class struggle' is important here.

⁵⁸ The Communist Manifesto, Penguin, 1979.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Q Hogg, The Case for Conservatism (Penguin: Harmsworth, 1959), 87.

I should make clear here that questions of significance, and questions of truth or falsity are different and the latter cannot be replaced by the latter. Thus it is not my intention to protect any ideological writings about the past by deflecting the question of truth into one of significance. An example might make this clearer. A biblical scholar might make the point that the significance of the creation story in the Book of Genesis lies, not in its literal meaning, but in its dramatic power as a narrative which draws our attention to the fundamental gulf between God and Man which springs from our sinful nature. But this fact (assuming it to be one) does not prevent us from asking the question "Is the human race descended directly from Adam and Eve?" We can and the simple answer is "No". In a similar way, all kinds of ~~so~~ pertinent questions may be put to a Marxist or Liberal historian about their account of the past. My point is that for the Marxist the past does have a significance that it does not have for the colleague who is not of an ideological disposition. In particular, the matter of ~~sig~~ significance (as distinct from truth) will need to be understood in terms of other aspects of a particular ideology, for example, the views about human nature, social change or political activity. At this level the question of truth may not be the most appropriate one to ask, in the same way that it may not be the most apposite inquiry to ask if Adam really ate the apple. Talk about the past may enter into an ideology in many ways, and not all of them will be dealt with in a comprehensive fashion. As we shall see, some of Marx's work can be described as mythical (in the sense of telling a story which makes sense of present experience, yet remains rooted in past happenings and future predictions) and this mythical element combines with varying degrees of ease with claims to academic detachment. In a similar way, Liberal contract theories are quite like the Genesis myth mentioned above; their significance lies

in relating a view of political society, not in a factual reconstruction of the earliest men and their habits. But not all myths about the past are ideological and all ideologies do not have to have a mythical element. I shall only be raising the question of myths when it seems relevant to do so here.

The past enters into ideological thought as part of the overall scheme which that ideology propounds. It is not an independent entity, but part of a wider whole. Only by looking at that whole can we make sense of the past understood ideologically and the intention is now to look at examples of such thought in that context.

CHAPTER THREE

The purpose of the next three chapters is to look at particular ideologies, and to illustrate the uses to which the past is put. The ideologies I shall be concerned with are Marxism, Liberalism and Conservatism. As has already been stated, these are not intended to be exhaustive of the range of ideological thought, but to be illustrative of it. In each chapter, I shall start by trying to make some general comments about the main themes to be found in a particular ideology and at the overall conceptual structure to be found there. I shall, therefore, look at some of the main trends and divisions within an ideology, but without deciding between them. This will be followed by a discussion about the view (or views) of history and the past that are to be found in an ideology and how this relates to the general conceptual framework already outlined. This will be further illustrated by reference to specific authors who are to be seen as representatives of a tradition of thought within an ideology. Needless to say, this may involve some simplification, but not, I hope, in any misleading way. The literature of, and about, Marxism is littered with claims as to what Marxism is really about. Some of the fiercest ideological debates (as we shall note in more detail later on¹) take place between those who claim to be Marxists. This very fact could lead us into a long and unproductive survey of the disciples of the various traditions within Marxism itself, without the possibility of reaching any conclusion other than the commonplace observation that the works of Marx like the Bible, the writings of J S Mill and Harold Wilson provide support for

¹ See Chapter 7.

a wide variety of readings, some of which are difficult to reconcile with each other. Given the length of Marx's career as a writer, the different topics he dealt with and the different roles he adopted (journalist, historian, philosopher, polemicist and so on) this is scarcely surprising. Only a thinker of great dullness and little enterprise would leave no unresolved ambiguities in their work. As I shall argue later on, the search for what Marx really meant is futile because it is impossible. This does not mean that any interpretation of Marx is in order, or that we cannot say some attempts to come to grips with his writings do ~~them~~ more justice than others. The process is not an arbitrary one, but neither can there be an essence of Marxist thought nor an original set of Marxist doctrines from which all genuine Marxist thought must be shown to develop.²

It is, nevertheless, possible to make some general remarks which do justice to the broad sweep of Marxist thought whilst noting that all Marxists may not put equal weight on each element. A convenient starting point is that Marx places great emphasis on the concept of Man as a producer (as opposed to a rational agent or sinner).³ He takes up the point that in order to survive, men must produce their means of livelihood, and that production of the basic necessities of life is prior to any 'higher' activities such as art, literature, and the Rubik cube. How they do this is, however, not a matter of pure choice since the world they are born into and act upon has certain natural resources and certain (possible) productive processes. In acting upon these resources by means of existing methods, men change the environment and

² For a fuller discussion see Chapter 7.

³ For example, the discussion in K Marx and F Engels, The German Ideology, ed C J Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), 42-3.

thereby open up the possibility of new productive processes or make their development an urgent necessity, which in turn become the limits within which the next generation will start. For Marx, productive activity is social activity and to imagine a form of productive activity is, to adapt Wittgenstein's aphorism, to imagine a form of life. Beyond the most primitive subsistence economy all production involves the division of labour and this, for Marx, entails the unequal distribution of goods and property. It is the basis of class society, which establishes the division between the owners and the producers, the exploiters and the exploited.

In any particular society there will be a dominant class which will control the material forces of production which that society has developed. Not only that, the dominant class will also be the ruling intellectual force⁴ and through its control of concepts will present its rule as being in the common interest and by implication, that its downfall will lead to the ruin of society as a whole. The way in which concepts are controlled in George Orwell's "1984" would be an explicit version of this. Thus the ideas of a society are as much instruments of class rule as are the productive processes and machinery of government.

A consequence of the relationship between productive/technological forces in a society and the institutions of that society is that society is dynamic; that is to say it changes. The way in which Marx sees this relationship operating is captured in the following quotation:

⁴ K Marx and F Engels, Selected Works in Three Volumes (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), Vol I, 47.

the material productive forces of a society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression of the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.⁵

New productive forces cannot be kept within old social institutions and so the dominant class is ousted by its rivals - violently. The ideas of the previous ruling class are then unmasked; for they can be seen as partial and biased rather than universally benevolent or necessary. The new dominant class, arising as it does on a broader social base then presents itself as the benefactor of society as a whole and its ideas become dominant. Thus after the English revolution in the 17th century talk of 'divine right of kings' is replaced by bourgeois contract theories as the explanation and justification of political society and Locke replaces Filmer. This process continues until a final revolution, led by the proletariat, ends class society. So far, ~~What~~ Marx might be said to offer us is a theory of social change, perhaps more properly called sociological than historical, which claims great explanatory power and, above all, preaches no values. Men are primarily producers of the substance of their lives and the productive relationships they enter into engender conflict and change through class antagonism until classes are abolished. But there is a second theme in Marxism that is worth mentioning here which does not always sit easily with the confident rationalism of the previous assertions. In some of his earliest writings, especially in the 1844 manuscripts, Marx discusses the concepts of alienation and estrangement.

⁵ Op. cit., Vol III, 363.

The place of these notions within Marx's thought is a matter of deep division amongst Marxists. There are those such as Avineri⁶ and McLellan⁷ who argue that the concept of alienation in particular is fundamental to Marx's thought as a whole, and provides much of the implicit philosophical backing to the seemingly dry economics of Capital. As McLellan puts it:

Nevertheless, the second of Marx's major analyses, and the one most evident in his early writings, that of alienation, has acquired an importance far greater than he imagined.⁸

and

The continuity in Marx's thought has been demonstrated beyond all doubt by the publication of the Grundrisse ...⁹

Radically opposed to this interpretation are Althusser and his followers who hold that the concept of alienation belongs to the early 'humanist' thoughts of Marx and was replaced by a more rigorous scientific analysis in Capital and the later works.¹⁰ Occupying an intermediate position are those such as the English Marxist, Terry Eagleton, who assert that Marx does indeed retain the concept of alienation throughout his works, but the character of the concept is refined and made more precise and scientific in the later works; for Eagleton, alienation in the early works is a moral concept, in the later works an objective scientific concept.¹¹ This is not a debate that can be usefully contributed to

⁶ S. Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

⁷ For example, D. McLellan, Marx before Marxism (London, Penguin, 1972).

⁸ Op. cit., 273.

⁹ Op. cit., 281 ff.

¹⁰ L. Althusser, For Marx (London: Allen Lane, 1969).

¹¹ T. Eagleton, Marxists and Christians: Answers for Brian Wicker, New Blackfriars, 56 (October 1975), 465-70.

here, except perhaps to note that it shows little sign of abating precisely because there are ambiguities and inconsistencies to be found in Marx. There is, however, no doubt of the importance of the concept, the debate surrounding it, and the way in which this strand of thought enters into Marxism.

Most commentators on the 1844 manuscripts seem to agree that alienation is a term adopted from Hegel but made, as it were, concrete. For Hegel, alienation is the penalty that must be paid for the development of self-consciousness: the mind is externalised in its works, and yet confronts them as works. It is a divided mind that has not yet reached harmonious self-consciousness. For Marx, the division is between the worker and the object he has created through his labour. In a capitalist society, the worker creates wealth through his labour power which confronts him in the object that he has created, and this is taken from him and expropriated by the capitalist. According to Marx the worker is alienated from himself, from the object of his labour, from other men and from his 'species being'. Or, as a Marxist once put the matter to me, "Capitalism can pay a worker £100 a week (it was a long time ago) but it can never make him human". In general, Marx sees human labour under capitalism as subjecting Man to his unconsciously formed creations rather than helping him to master the world he lives in. This subjection is not, as in Hegel, a condition of existence, it can be transcended in the Communist society where men are no longer the slaves of the power of capital. This is, importantly, as true of capitalists as of workers.

As we have already noted, these various elements are given different weights by opposing schools of Marxists. For example, those who see Marxism as primarily 'scientific' often stress the economic aspects of his work, claiming that they offer an objective account of economic

structures, lay bare the real basis of society and make it possible to predict economic change through a study of the contradictions that capitalism (or any other economic system) generates in the course of its development. This tradition of thought is associated in the popular mind with many of those who immediately followed Marx, especially Engels, and current 'official' thought in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, there are those who advocate the view that Marx's chief claim to fame is in the elaboration of a philosophical doctrine of human nature which, though not entirely separated from economic circumstances, offers an account of what it is to be truly human and the way in which communism, by overcoming the worker/owner dichotomy, can free human beings to realise their true potential as unalienated Men. Certain European dissidents within the Marxist camp and members of what used to be called the 'New Left' are prominent here.

What is important for the purposes of this thesis is the way in which these elements come together in Marx's treatment of the past, and how the understanding of concepts such as producer, and alienation help us to understand the part the study of the past plays within Marxism and for Marxists. In other words, not only are we interested in what Marxists hold about the past, but the point of investigating the past and attempting to understand it. I shall be suggesting that Marx's writings on the past are an odd mixture of empirical and conceptual points which are cast in the form of a dramatic structure such that knowing the end of the story, we can locate the significance of present or past actions. Marx's writings on the past can be studied as history and commented upon for their veracity, attention to evidence and so on, but to see them purely in terms of understanding the past for its own sake would be to miss out an important dimension, in the

same way that anyone taking Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France" just as a rather eccentric account of recent political events in France would, one might feel, be missing the point of it all. Historical materialism (even if there is no evidence to suggest that Marx ever used the phrase) is taken by many commentators to be Marx's crowning achievement. This has led to many audacious claims being advanced on Marx's behalf by enthusiastic disciples. Engels, for example, in the course of his peroration at Marx's graveside stated that:

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of the development of human history.¹²

The Italian Marxist, A Labriola, holds that critical communism 'foresees' the future, because of the immanent necessity of history seen in the future of its economic substructure¹³ and in the 'Fundamentals of Marxism Leninism' we find the Marxist 'time telescope' through which the proletarian future can be seen; the vision of which the bourgeois academic can only turn away from.¹⁴ It is this interpretation which has been taken up by a variety of Marx's critics including philosophers such as Popper¹⁵ and Acton¹⁶ and historians such as Alan Taylor.¹⁷ The root of their objection is that this view is, in Popper's celebrated phrase, 'historicist'.

¹² Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol III, 162.

¹³ A Labriola, Essays in the materialist conception of history, trans. C H Kerr, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966).

¹⁴ Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism (ed) O Kuusinen (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1961), 18.

¹⁵ K R Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

¹⁶ H B Acton, Illusion of the Epoch. Marxism; Leninism as a philosophical creed (London, 1955).

¹⁷ A J P Taylor, in his introduction to the Penguin edition of The Communist Manifesto, (London, 1967).

But it may, of course, be unwise to try and treat Marx and Engels as a single philosopher here, or even as two thinkers with no substantial disagreements between them. Though this was Lenin's view, and hence represents orthodox Soviet Marxist opinion, it has been increasingly challenged in recent years with, as has already been mentioned, the new emphasis found since the publication of some of Marx's earlier writings. The clear separation of Marx, Engels and Lenin as thinkers is, for example, the basis of Isaac Deutscher's critical review of Acton's 'The Illusion of the Epoch'. The case for the identification of the views of Marx and Engels on history (and on materialism in general) is based upon such undisputed facts as their close friendship and working relationship over many years, their joint authorship of several works and in the case of Engels' own 'Anti-Duhring', on the fact that Marx read the proofs and is accepted as having written Chapter 10 of that work himself. Given the fact that Engels' abridgement of that work, published as 'Socialism, Utopian and Scientific', became better known and more widely read than most of Marx's own works, it is not surprising to find that much of the Marxism of the early Marxists was the creation of Engels as much as of Marx. But it is claimed, an Engels who was in full agreement with his collaborator.

Against this is the view that an examination of their respective writings, especially the '1844 manuscripts' reveals a wide divergence between the two. Schmidt¹⁸ and Avineri both suggest that Engels (and by

¹⁸ A Schmidt, The concept of nature in Marx (London: New Left Books, 1971).

implication Lenin) is more akin to the mechanistic materialists attacked by Marx. Avineri claims, for example, that Engels uses dialectics in an un-Marxist way and produces only a vulgar form of Darwinism.

... whilst Marx built his system pari passu with the construction of his dialectics, Engels just applies a dialectical scheme to a given set of natural science data, as if the dialectical scheme were just an external, formal method, not an immanent content of the subject matter. The different approach leads to different results.¹⁹

This is echoed in Lichtheim's view that for Marx the understanding of human nature is necessary for the understanding of history, but for Engels, human nature is an aspect of general (evolutionary) nature and therefore, knowable through laws.²⁰ For such scholars, Engels has been an obstacle rather than an orable.

Now, as has been stressed above, the purpose here is not to decide which of these views are the correct interpretation of Marx. Such an enterprise is, in this context, beside the point since we are dealing with Marxism and not merely with that set of writings attributed to Marx himself. Thus, even if we could agree that Engels and Lenin did not share common cause with Marx on all issues, nor derived each refinement of Marxism from one of his works (rather in the way that some fundamentalist Protestants require that every doctrine be grounded in the bible) it would not stop us acknowledging that Engels and Lenin are still accepted contributors to the Marxist tradition and as such, can fairly be described as 'Marxists' in the context of discussing the Marxist view of the past.

¹⁹ Avineri, op cit, 70.

²⁰ G Lichtheim, Marxism. An historical and critical study (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

Since the views on historical materialism attributed to Engels and Lenin (if not always to Marx) are an important strand in some Marxist conceptions of the past it is necessary to look at what is involved in them and to assess their coherence. A version of this view may be found in Maurice Cornforth's 'Historical Materialism'²¹ in which he argues that there are three guiding principles which historical materialism employs in the understanding of social affairs. These are 1) that social development is regulated by objective laws discoverable by science, 2) that there is a superstructure of ideas, cultural, political, and social developments that arise on the basis of the material life of a society, and 3) the ideas and institutions that thus arise play an active role in the development of material life.²² These principles follow from the application of general materialist doctrines to the study of society. The important points to note here are 1) the possibility of prediction based on correct apprehension of the 'objective' laws, for

... the great social movements arising at different periods of history exemplify the same causal connection operating in different circumstances. If, for example, three hundred years ago there was a movement to get rid of feudalism, and today there is a movement to get rid of capitalism, these movements, different as they are, repeat the same process - they both arise because an existing social system has become a fetter upon economic development.²³

Though history has as an important element the activities and intentions of people and not just the blind interaction of natural forces, it is possible, through the laws of economic development to

²¹ M Cornforth, Historical Materialism (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1953).

²² Ibid. , 20.

²³ Ibid. , 23-4.

see how the victory of capitalism over feudalism was inevitable, as is the victory of socialism over capitalism. 2) There is an explicit distinction made between the economic base of a society and its political, cultural, etc. superstructure such that the former determines the latter. It is the advent of capitalism that gives rise to the 'Protestant ethic' rather than vice versa.

Thus in the 'Communist Manifesto' a study of the necessities in that epoch reveals the 'inevitability' of the fall of the bourgeois and the victory of the proletariat.²⁴ Though judicious manipulation and the intervention of exceptional individuals may shorten or prolong the birth pangs of the new era, the child cannot be aborted, nor kept in the womb beyond its rightful time. And, as Marx notes elsewhere²⁵ the midwife of such a birth is force.

Opponents of Marxism are usually able to entertain themselves at this point by pointing out the very poor track record of prior predictions, as opposed to post hoc rationalisations. Engels, for example, can be found advancing the claim that revolution could not survive in one country and that it would break out simultaneously in England, the USA, France and Germany²⁶ and the failure of revolution to occur in the advanced western capitalist countries after the Great War, but in Russia is held to have necessitated Lenin's discovery of imperialism and the law of uneven development. Popper, on the other hand, offers a logical objection of the form; the course of history is greatly influenced by advances in knowledge and that we cannot predict such advances, since if we could it would be present knowledge and not future

²⁴ K Marx and F Engels, The Communist Manifesto (London: Penguin, 1967), 94.

²⁵ See K Marx, Capital (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), Vol I, 751.

²⁶ Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol I, 91-2.

knowledge. We cannot, therefore, predict the course of human history. One is reminded here of Humphrey Lyttleton's rejoinder to the question "Where is jazz going?" - "If I knew where jazz was going, I'd be there."²⁷ Certainly there is something odd about the idea that we can see the future on the basis of certain knowledge in the present; for the future is not 'there' to be seen. As yet, it has no substance. This does not mean, of course, that all talk of the future must be either nonsensical or deterministic (in the sense that if it is true that I will die on 30 May 2052 it is true now that I will do so), for as agents we can decide what to do tomorrow and this shapes the way the future will be. The power that determinism holds over us here only holds as long as we see ourselves as spectators rather than as agents. If we accept this then our power to decide is seen as a consequence of our imprisonment rather than as an expression of our freedom. But when we say, for example, "It was inevitable, there was nothing I could do about it", the second statement is a ground for the first and not vice versa.²⁸

Both these objections are related in the sense that it is the unpredictability of advances in human knowledge that makes particular assessments of what is likely to happen such a risky affair. How could Engels have foretold the development of the British Railways Pension Fund or even the advent of such an exceptional character as Lenin in such a backward country as Russia? The ability of capitalism to survive the onset of terminal crises has been a sad reminder of the fallibility of such predictions.

²⁷ Quoted in P. Winch, The Idea of a Social Science, 94.

²⁸ I owe this example to Mr D. Cockburn.

It is the rejection of a strict interpretation of such phrases as 'iron laws' and the rest that has led to a different conception of necessity in Marxism. This interpretation is based upon passages such as the following from the '18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte':

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.²⁹

The notion of necessity here is not so much that of inexorable laws, but of the appropriate behaviour of capitalists and proletarians in a particular, given situation. The relationship of capitalist to worker is a result of the economic relationship they have with each other, something that is outside their control as individual agents. The capitalist may sell his shares and 'opt out', but this will not change the structure of capitalism. In order to succeed in industry or business as a capitalist entrepreneur will still be forced to abide by the laws of the market place, to kill or be killed. And, it is in pursuing his interests as a capitalist that the individual will be forced away from reconciliation with labour since, according to Marx, the only way to succeed as a capitalist is to (in effect) cut the living standards of the workforce.

Perhaps the most appropriate analogy here is with the notion of necessity we find in classical tragedy. Here, each act is uncaused in a strict sense, but the combination of the particular situation and convention drives the characters towards a series of events that

²⁹ K Marx, and F Engels, Selected Works, Vol 1, 247.

seem to flow logically and irresistibly towards their terrible end. Thus the death of Agammemnon in the first part of the 'Orestia' (itself the 'inevitable' consequence of earlier events) leads us inexorably to the pursuit of Orestes by the Furies at the end of the sequence. No wonder then that the French Marxist, Lucien Goldmann sees capitalism itself as a tragic hero, for as in great dramatic tragedies, the moment of supreme triumph is the moment of inevitable downfall. Having conquered the world, Marlowe's Tambourlaine is still doomed. The situation for both the tragic hero and the capitalist is one in which things are too vast to be overcome by the individual will. This is echoed in the 'Preface to the Critique of Political Economy', where Marx writes:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relationships that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production that correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of productions constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises the legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their being, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.³⁰

To be fair to Engels here, there are points at which he too argues that the relationship between social being and consciousness is not a strict one way process, as in the following letter to Bloch

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimate determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence

³⁰ Op cit, Vol I, 503.

if someone twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, senseless, abstract phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements in the superstructure ... also ~~exerce~~ise their influence on the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents ... the economic moment finally asserts itself as necessary.³¹

Though these passages are not without their difficulties, they clearly present what is, on the surface at least, an attractive picture of social and historical change. For it is undoubtedly the case that there are certain economic boundaries to what we might count as reasonable behaviour which we do not assent to at birth, but which are part of the society we come into; nor is society the construction of an individual or individuals. We can all see the way in which events such as the general series of prices rises which affected England in the 16th and 17th centuries brought about major social transformations (the bankruptcy of aristocrats, rise of certain merchants, etc.) without being the result of the conscious actions of individuals.

Part of the problem with the strand of Marxist thought we have been discussing; that which subscribes to the second proposition quoted from Connforth earlier; is the formulation chosen appears to be subject to insuperable difficulties.

None of what follows should be taken to imply that economic reasons are in themselves never important in constructing a narrative of historical events. Clearly they are often the main, if not the overriding reasons in many spheres of activity. The claim made on behalf of Marx can be

³¹Op cit, Vol III, 487.

understood in two ways. Firstly, it can be taken as an empirical claim to the effect that there is always and everywhere, as a matter of fact, a definite relationship between relations of production and forms of social consciousness. This claim would, presumably, be open to refutation by the production of societies with identical production relations but with very different moral/political conventions or by the production of two societies with similar moral/political standards but with different production arrangements. It would not, we should note, simply be enough to assert a chronological or purely contingent relationship between the two, any more than the fact that riots follow a period of increasing unemployment shows the latter caused the former;³² post hoc ergo propter hoc. But this gives rise to the nub of the difficulty, for how could we discover whether such a relationship between relations of production and social consciousness was in fact the case ?

We seem to be offered a model which suggests that economic activity gives rise to social and political relations, such that changes in the economic foundations become transmitted to the 'superstructure' which then alters in the appropriate way. The trouble with this, as both Acton and Plamenatz³³ point out is that it is extremely difficult to conceive of such a separation. Economic and/or productive relationships can only be such relationships in the context of an already existing social and legal framework. If these were taken away, there would be nothing left that could be meaningfully called

³² Which is not to say, of course, that the two are never related.

³³ See J Plamenatz, Man and Society (2 vols.), (London: Longmans, 1963), especially Volume II.

an economic or property relationship at all. The kind of organisation that Engels presupposes in his claim that men are producers and that there is a division of labour, already assumes the existence of social, moral and legal norms. In short Marxists have assumed that which they wish to explain. The mistake is analagous to that of contract theorists who attempt to explain society by a contract, the concept of which only has meaning within a society that already has political and legal norms. It would be difficult, then, to assign chronological priority to economic activity, simply because we could not distinguish it in the relevant sense.

On the other hand, Marx's claim might be taken as implying the logical priority of economic activity over other kinds of human activity, it is, as he and Engels claim the fundamental activity that distinguishes humans from others.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisations. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as the production of the physical existence of the individuals. ... What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals this depends upon the material conditions determining their production.³⁴

What one would want to suggest here is that production of any kind, and human activity [as opposed to animal activity (apes might have a

³⁴ K Marx and F Engels, The German Ideology, 42, italics original.

system of signs for communicating with each other³⁵ would be language based and as such have a series of moral conceptions and categories which would be implicit in that language. In other words a moral language is fundamental to human society such that we would not imagine a society without moral values, norms and conventions.³⁵ These concepts might differ widely from society to society and be related to 'productive relations' (a society with no private ownership might have no concept of stealing, the change from a co-operative agricultural society to an individualistic, hunting, one might lead to a breakdown or reappraisal of a moral code and so on) but they are implicit in any natural language we can imagine. As Peter Winch has argued in a paper entitled 'Nature and Convention',³⁶ moral activity is not like scientific activity, for we could stop doing the former, but not the latter. The demands of morality are always with us, just because we are human and to avoid them by saying "I'm not interested" as we would with science would merely count further against us. As Wittgenstein puts the matter in his lecture on Ethics, we could imagine saying "I'm not very good at tennis, but I don't want to improve" but hardly imagine saying "I know I'm behaving badly, but I don't want to do better".³⁷ If this is so, then moral ideas, far

³⁵ An interesting counter-example often quoted is that of the Ik tribe in Africa, where the members of the tribe cheat and steal from each other, rob the sick and lame as a matter of course and so on. The point is that they still have a moral code which is prescriptive in the relevant sense, even if that code is abhorrent to us. For a fuller discussion see C Battersby, Morality and the Ik, Philosophy, 53 (April 1978), 201-14.

³⁶ See P Winch, Ethics and Action (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

³⁷ L Wittgenstein, A Lecture on Ethics, Philosophical Review, 74, 1965. 3-12.

from being the result of economic relationships, will be of fundamental importance in deciding what those relationships will be and how they will develop. This is not to say that an economic motive might not be dressed up in moral terms (someone attempting to regain sovereignty for economic reasons might couch their claims in terms of fighting for freedom or democracy), but that is clearly a different matter.

Some Marxists have tried to avoid the above difficulties by positing a different relationship between economic relations and other ideas than that imagined in the crude 'base/superstructure' model. For example, the Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukacs³⁸ claims that the fundamental category of Marxist thought is that of the 'dominant moment'. This notion is connected with the argument found in Engels and elsewhere that there is always an interaction between the economic base and the social, political, etc., superstructure. In the terminology of Lukacs, they form together a 'totality' where for any given X and Y there will be a reciprocal relationship between them such that the two are not conceived of as discrete entities. Thus, production and consumption are related in such a way as to form a totality in which production is the dominant moment. But Lukacs is saying more than that we must look at the economic structure of society in order to understand it. He holds that human society is the necessary outcome of productive forces and that the kind of productive forces will bring into existence certain conditions in which men are faced with a question to which there are concrete alternatives, and to which they try to formulate concrete answers. But although the 'questions' are necessary, in the sense of being imposed independently of any human will, the answers we find are not. Thus, although capitalism can only be overthrown by the proletariat

³⁸ Most of the following is drawn from G H R Parkinson, Georg Lukacs (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) and A C MacIntyre, Marxist mask and romantic face: Lukacs on Thomas Mann in Against the Self Images of the Age (London: Duckworth, 1971), 60-70.

realising its historical mission, and the class nature of capitalism puts a 'question' to the proletariat (suffer or gain your freedom) there can be no guarantee that the proletariat will in fact realise this and overthrow its oppressors. According to Lukacs, the proletariat will only succeed in overthrowing capitalism when it achieves 'proletarian consciousness'. This is not any easy concept to grasp since it is not, Lukacs insists, what proletarians actually think, nor the average or sum total of what they think. Nonetheless it is not fictional, rather it is hypothetical; that is, what proletarians would think in a situation were they to grasp its essence correctly. For Lukacs, such consciousness is the 'locus of objectivity' for the proletariat is the only class that does not need a distorted ideology to be the class that it is. It requires no illusions about itself, unlike the bourgeois which needs to see itself as carrying out the interests of its own class (cf the Master/Slave dialectic in Hegel). The proletariat, since its interests are those of society, needs no such illusions. In a world where there seem to be only the relative standpoints determined by class ideology, objectivity becomes possible through the correct grasp of proletarian consciousness.

But the concept of 'totality' even if it is a closer interpretation of Marx, only offers a solution that is more apparent than real. We can see this if we press the question of what determines change within a given totality. Suppose that we had a totality in which there were economic and extra-economic aspects, how exactly would we separate the two since as we have seen what is to count as economic will be partially constituted by extra-economic ideas and will also contain non-economic ideas? The problem is still that either the category

of economic is artificially restricted or that we are left with the uncontroversial claim that people are motivated by a mixture of economic, moral and social reasons.

Another way of construing the importance of Marx's view of history is in terms of his distinction between 'appearance' and 'reality' in capitalism. He argues that most economic analysis sticks to the level of appearance and thus fails to understand capitalism as a set of social relations. This is bound to be the case since appearances directly contradict the 'real' nature of capitalism. Thus, one might suggest, anyone who claims that non-economic factors can dominate economic ones is simply stuck at the level of appearance. The attraction of such a claim, which has been already indirectly mentioned in the earlier discussion of 'false consciousness' stems from two seemingly uncontroversial points. Firstly, that it is often the case that humans do offer rationalisations for behaviour, their real motives are not what they appear. Secondly, the historian as an observer is often in a better position to see what was 'really' going on than the people who were living at the time. He may, for example, be able to correct Thomas More's views on what happened during the enclosures because he has more evidence than was available to contemporaries or, more interestingly, he may be able to explain the inflation that took place in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries in a way that was unavailable to contemporaries, just as a modern scientist could explain the 'real' causes of the Lisbon earthquake. The important questions, here, concern the conditions for the intelligibility of such claims. In the case of rationalisations being offered for actions we may have in mind someone like Shakespeare's Lear. In the situation we are given, Lear believes that Coneril and

Regan are his 'true' daughters, that Cordelia is ungrateful, Gloucester a traitor and so on. When unassailable evidence is put to him that this is not so, Lear offers excuses, or simply refuses to face the truth till the situation is ~~beyond~~ redemption, and disaster overtakes. But certain things need to be pointed out. There is an implied distinction between the normal (true) description of the state of affairs and that offered by the person offering a rationalisation, based, as we saw, on the tension that exists between Lear's beliefs and the way things in fact are. Lear's beliefs and description could be true, but in fact are not. Now normal is not an abstract term that can be applied from outside; what is normal and what is abnormal depends on the social life of the agents involved. That is to say, calling Lear's reaction abnormal is to contrast it with the normal standards of his society. Secondly, therefore, the actions we wish to describe as the results of 'self-deception' or as rationalisations must be intelligible within the way of life that the agent moves in. We could not attribute a 'Christ complex' to someone living in a pre-Christian society. As Peter Winch points out, a society with a different conception of fatherhood to ours could not be analysed in terms of certain Freudian categories.³⁹ Even unconscious motives cannot transcend the bounds of sense. Closely connected with this is the idea that the person we accuse of offering rationalisations for his or her behaviour must be capable of understanding the alternative description we offer them. If a person does not have the concept of, say, personal property, we cannot describe them as being jealous of X's car. In an article entitled 'The causation of ideas',⁴⁰ W H Walsh

³⁹ Idea of a Social Science, 47 ff, 90.

⁴⁰ W H Walsh, The causation of ideas, History and Theory, 14, 1975, 186-199.

distinguishes between conscious and unconscious assumptions, but the examples he gives of the latter are not different in kind, but are capable of explicit formulation if need be. (I do not bother to remind myself that language is rule governed before I speak, but could do so).

The difficulty with the Marxist view is that it does not examine individuals within the categories of their society, but challenges those categories themselves. In short, it gives actions and reasons a meaning outside the framework within which talk of meaning has sense: for, like it or not, the meaning of an action is that which it is understood to have within the society concerned. As with Lear, his actions are unreasonable given the circumstances, but the Marxist, in calling actions the result of 'false consciousness' is not making this contrast at all. For example, however normal or reasonable the offering of religious reasons for a Crusade or whatever may be within a society, they must be rationalisations of real economic motives. But to come to any situation with a pre-conceived notion of what certain actions must or 'really' means is an only result in the error of finding the 'real' meaning of an action, only to discover that we have put it there ourselves. We cannot change the structure within which an action or utterance has meaning without changing, or even destroying, that meaning. And in doing so we cease to discuss the reasons and motives of real Men in favour of the very 'abstractions' that Marx castigates in other contexts. To sum up, to say that whatever reasons X gives as religious must be rationalisations destroys the contrast between normal and abnormal religious reasons that makes such a contrast possible in the first place. It also begs the question, for in order to say what X is really doing, we must already have decided what is

important and what to leave out as superfluous - and this seems to be arbitrary legislation. An example may make the discussion clearer. A person may cling to religious belief because of the death of his father, and in time come to invest God with all the (perfected) attributes of his human father. We may call this a neurosis, masquerading as religious belief. The important thing is to note that 'masquerading' denotes a contrast, not with normality per se, but between genuine and abnormal religious belief. In other words, it is religious criteria that are the basis of our distinction.

If we examine the second set of examples outlined above, we can see that in the case of More's belief about enclosures we have a shared set of criteria for judging whether or not they were expanding and that More was mistaken. It is important to note though, that he could have been right, and that his mistake was something he could have apprehended had he possessed the relevant evidence. There is no conflict between appearance and reality here. Furthermore, in as much as the historian is constructing an account of the enclosure movement, More's account does not enter as evidence (since we know from better sources that he was in error), and in as much as he is explaining More's attitudes and actions, it is irrelevant that More was wrong in his assessment.

In the example of inflation being caused by an increase in the money supply, two answers seem possible. If the society or period under discussion has any conception of a relationship between prices and the amount of money or availability of goods, then we seem to have a situation analogous to that of More, ie there are shared criteria for explaining what happened, and such an explanation could have been brought out. Suppose, however, that there is no such conception. Here I am inclined to say that we can only try and bring out what is involved in such a situation in terms of its proximity

to a concept that is available to us, in this case, 'inflation'. That is to say, they had what we would call inflation. But in this sense there is no conflict between the respective descriptions offered; one is not what was 'really' happening and the other false, for that would presuppose those common criteria that are, *ex hypothesi*, missing. The point is that although people in the past may have been mistaken about certain things, and may have offered rationalisations for some behaviour, they could not, in general be mistaken about what they were doing, nor, in general be offering rationalisations.

So far, we have seen that Marxism offers a variety of 'materialist' understandings of history, some of which are strongly determinist, others less so. The common thread that seems to unite them is the belief that the motive force of human history is to be found in human material activity, in production. The particular state of the forces of production at any time explains the 'superstructure' of political and social ideas and organisations which perform the function of supporting that economic system. Production has gone through a series of epochs - Asiatic, feudal and bourgeois - the end of which has been characterised by the overthrow of the ruling class, by class struggle. Capitalism, although it is an enormous advance on feudalism and has allowed men to control in unparalleled ways the forces of nature, contains the seeds of its own destruction for it will inevitably lead to a concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands, a falling rate of profit and ~~the~~ impoverishment of the propertyless workers. This will be the prelude to revolution. Moreover, as we have also seen, capitalism involves the alienation of men from each other, such that they are not truly human until they can escape from the chains of capitalist economic domination.

There are difficulties with the various versions of this account, either in the form of apparent counter examples or failed predictions, or in the form of suggesting that the productive forces of a society cannot be used to explain historical change in the way imagined. One further set of points worth making is to draw attention to the connection between historical materialism and materialism in general. Cornforth, for example, suggested earlier that the former was simply a case of the application of truths from the latter. According to Engels, and following him, Lenin, the world is 'really' there in a way that is independent of consciousness. What we receive through our sense are 'copies' of reality. Now it may be argued here that such a conception of knowledge leaves the 'real' world as unknowable as it is for the greatest sceptic, since we only ever see a 'copy' and that if this is intended as an argument against a general scepticism it will not do. But, more to the point, it will not do as an account of how we know of the past since the past is not something we can even perceive a 'copy' of. As we have seen, there is evidence for past events which, no doubt, 'really' happened; but it must be stressed that in a strict sense we can never get at 'what really happened' since it must be mediated for us through the evidence that we have available. We can, of course, compare one piece of evidence with another and use one to reject or modify the other, but we never compare evidence with the 'real thing'. What we know of the past cannot be other than evidence for it, or to put the matter another way, the past has to become evidence before we can encompass it. It is possible to find a more subtle version of materialism (in general) in Marx himself. As Avineri and others point out, reality is, for Marx, shaped through consciousness; it does not consist of

'impressions' or 'sensations' that are private and incorrigible. This is, I take it, the force of the various remarks in the '1844' manuscripts⁴¹ about the senses as 'theoreticians' that sort out and identify experience. Unlike the empiricist, the Marxist does not enter a world of buzzing sensations. The intellect is something active rather than passive and in the first of the schematic 'Theses on Feuerbach'⁴² there is the claim that it is Idealism rather than materialism that has developed the importance of 'sensuous activity'. There is, perhaps, some parallel with the Greek notion of the senses 'reaching out' to apprehend reality, in contrast to the empiricist notion of the mind as a blank photographic plate. The emphasis here is on 'practice'. A good theory is one that works and enables us to enhance our mastery of the world. But again, this not only has a difficulty in terms of theories in general (since we can all imagine successful actions being based upon false theories) but it will not do as far as the past is concerned since it is difficult to see how 'practice' could refute or confirm speculation about it. Indeed, looking back at the past to enable us to solve present problems even through the spectacles of historical materialism, does not always work. As Régis Debray pointed out, the only thing that can protect the revolutionary from being misled in this manner by history is his ignorance. As he put it "it was the good fortune of Castro and his companions that they had not read the works of Mao-Tse Tung".⁴³

⁴¹ K Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973).

⁴² K Marx and F Engels, Selected Works, Vol I, 13, 1st Thesis.

⁴³ Quoted in H Tudor, Political Myth (London: MacMillan, 1972), 132.

II

The point about the issue of practice here is one that is related to a much wider theme in Marxism as a whole. As the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach makes clear, theories are not enough, academic speculation needs to be linked to political action. In his 'Introduction to the Philosophy of History', Professor Walsh claims that the "proof of the Marxist pudding is in the eating, and it is not philosophers whom Marx invites to sample his dish".⁴⁴ But neither, in one sense, is Marx offering his dish to professional historians either. It is clearly intended to be something that nourishes the revolutionary proletariat by providing them with the knowledge that will enable them to assess their political actions in the present. As Lichtheim puts the matter, history, for Marx, does not culminate in the contemplation of the past but in the shaping of the future.⁴⁵ Marx is offering us not just an interesting account of 'real' as opposed to 'forms' of true motives, but a theory which is almost universal in its sweep. The past for Marx is not just an historical category which needs explanation according to the general principles of materialism, it is part of his overall conception of political action in which classes are constantly struggling and in which knowledge of any sort is a weapon in that struggle. Though any use to which Marx's theory of explanation may be put by working historians is independent of that theory itself, as a theory of historical explanation, to merely use it as part of a different enterprise is to mislead the reader as to

⁴⁴W H Walsh, An Introduction to the philosophy of history (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 164.

⁴⁵Op. cit., 40.

the part the past can be said to play within Marxism as a whole. In as much as Marxism is ideological in the sense indicated in Chapter I, the past is part of that ideological view of the world. The past is part of that overall picture, rather than the whole of the picture seen in a certain way.

We have already noted several of the themes and key conceptions of this overall view. Men are primarily producers, the mode of production has led to class society, and within capitalism, workers are alienated and estranged - not fully human. It is important to see that part of Marxism's force here is that not only claims great explanatory force (any event can be understood with the use of the appropriate analysis) but, above all, preaches no values. It explains but it does not prescribe. The analysis of the economic structure of capitalism, the nature of profit and the discovery of 'surplus value' do not rest on any moral conception of justice or fairness. The worker is not 'cheated' by the Capitalist, it is merely that the exchange value offered to the worker for his labour is less than the productive labour of a day's work, the difference being the capitalist's profit or surplus value created by the worker.⁴⁶ As Alasdair MacIntyre points out in his 'A Short History of Ethics',⁴⁷ Marx tried to excise all references to justice for the working class from the documents of the First International; for morality cannot alter class interests or change class structure.

But all of this changes if we look at Marxism more closely. The first thing to note is that Marx's theory does not start with a past state of affairs and develop till the Communist society is achieved. Its

⁴⁶ See Capital, Vol. I, 208 ff.

⁴⁷ MacIntyre, A Short History of Ethics, 213.

basis is quite firmly in the analysis of 19th century society and its particular economic and social structures. As a political activist, Marx wanted to make sense of the contemporary world such that it is intelligible to those intent on changing it in the required way. The guidance offered to anyone sharing Marx's view is to unite with the working class. Though the past, as conceived by Marx might bear out his analysis, it cannot start it. The famous claim in the 'Communist Manifesto' that "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle" is not an empirical generalisation, it is a whole way of understanding the past. There can be no counter examples, as there could with a generalisation or hypothesis, since it is a condition of any past event that it is an illustration of class struggle. As David Manning points out, the failure of a revolution to occur in Britain or the USA does not refute Marx's argument, it is merely another factor to be taken account of within that theory.⁴⁸

The failure of Engels' predictions are said, for example, to show the truth of Lenin's theories about the unevenness of capitalist development. In this sense, the past has no independent existence outside of the categories of Marxism and as such can only confirm those theories - to Marxists at least. To be sure, it can be argued that such an approach 'flattens out' historical or past events, since they are, in one sense, all the same - illustrations of class struggle - and that there is no real difference between past events. The whole operation is reminiscent of a kind of historical magician who says to his audience "Give me an event, any event, and I will show you how it illustrates class antagonism!"

⁴⁸ D J Manning, Liberalism (London, J M Dent & Sons, 1976), 83.

Such an approach may, of course, lead to the charge of unfalsifiability and, therefore, of theoretical vacuity. To some extent this is the price that must be paid for certainty in our actions in the political world. It is not possible to change things if we always have one eye open for events that will upset our schemes of understanding. Two points should be made here. Firstly, it would be absurd to argue that people never change their mind, or transfer political allegiance, often in quite a major way. Conservatives do become Socialists, Nationalists become Liberals and so on. Clearly one reason for this may be the way in which an adherent feels that an ideology no longer reflects the way that the world is. Indeed, there are many former Marxist intellectuals who were initially attracted by the view of history in Marxism but have been unable to reconcile it with their own academic concerns for truth (as they see it). Ideologies are not hermetically sealed from each other and a view may lose its grip of force to compel over time. But, and this is the second point, it will not do to conclude that the Marxist view of the past is an elaborate fiction which is obviously implausible and can only be kept afloat by gross intellectual turpitude. Marxism, as indeed do all ideologies, has a plausible relationship to the political world, or to the past. It would have been unlikely to have achieved anything at all if its explanation of the past bore no resemblance to the events which took place. In a complex theory such as Marxism it is unlikely that any simple knock down argument would immediately convince an adherent that the whole enterprise was mistaken and equally unlikely that a prima facie objection to class struggle in history would resolve the problem against Marxism straight away.

The past and the present are, to a certain extent, conflated in Marxism. By that I mean to say that the past is not a category that is rigidly distinct from or held apart from the present. The impression sometimes given is that there is an impartial world of facts about the past, understanding of which gives us the confidence to act in the present. Now the present, for all the talk of scientific analysis rather than moral prescription is essentially a sphere in which we must act. Though it may be possible to stand outside other societies and watch the dialectic at work, we cannot remain indifferent in our own. Marx did not preach social Quietism. The Marxist is part of his own analysis and as such, cannot stand apart from its consequences. He must choose, in Stokely Carmichael's arresting phrase to be 'part of the problem or part of the solution'. There is here a tension in Marxism, for the question of how we are to act now cannot wait on the results of historical investigation, it must depend for its motive power on the ability to convince people that they ought to act in a certain way. But the grounds that we offer for this are clearly related to values that we hold, or wish to convince others of. The mere fact, if it is one, that Communism is inevitable cannot itself determine our attitude towards it. We are Marxists because capitalism is exploitative and denies human freedom, not just because it offers to explain things to us. If we did not believe that the increasing impoverishment of the workers was a bad thing then it would be difficult to see the point in acting at all. And it is worth noting that the language Marx and his successors employ in describing both capitalism and their intellectual opponents combines in fair measure both rational argument, abuse and exhortation. Marx did, after all, describe

capitalism as being like a vampire, the dead labour that sucks on the living.⁴⁹ And, equally validly, we may feel that Communism does not usher in an era of freedom, but leads to collectivism and the erosion of human freedom; thus we would choose to reject it. In the case of our attitude to a future society in Marxism the picture is complicated by the incomplete vision that is offered to us. As R N Berki notes,⁵⁰ part of the problem here is that the promised abolition of the distinction between the private and the public (should such a thing be logically possible)⁵¹ can be seen either in terms of the virtual abolition of the state, through greater expression of individuals, or through the elimination of the individual through greater state control.

The fact that we are offered a vision of a future society in which alienation and exploitation are abolished draws our attention to the mythical quality in Marxism. I do not mean myth in any derogatory sense here; rather I mean the notion that there is a dramatic structure to the Marxist account of historical change, with a certain eschatological flavour. In the 'German Ideology', for example, Marx paints history as a dramatically coherent set of events and in as much as we know the end of the story, we can locate the significance of those events that are occurring now. At the end of the story is the

⁴⁹ Capital, Vol. I, 233.

⁵⁰ R N Berki, Socialism (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1975), 69-70.

⁵¹ It can be plausibly argued that the 'abolition' of one concept would lead to the 'abolition' of the other, since they derive their particular use from being contrasted with each other. If nothing is private, then nothing is public either.

communist society in which people spend part of their day in manual work, part in intellectual labour and part in cultural activities, an arrangement which is the antithesis of the present division of labour under capitalism. How, or if, the structure of the Marxist account is taken from Hegel's equally grand historical thesis does not concern us here. What matters is that we have a highly speculative account of history in the sense that not only are great claims made for the theory in terms of providing the key to the understanding of the past, but also in perceiving those trends that will shape the future.

In one sense Marx starts from his own present (19th century capitalist society) and sees the past as an extrapolation of current trends receding away in one direction and the future as a projection of those trends in another. But there is a certain air of paradox about the fact that it is, in a sense, only by claiming to have solved the problems of the future that Marx can give us confidence for understanding and solving the problems of the present. In other words, in Marx's historical framework we act in the present, not on the basis of our knowledge of the past, but in the confidence of our knowledge of the future.

It is worth repeating here that this does not mean Marx is offering us just a 'story' with no connection with events in the past. Part of the plausibility of the entire enterprise depends on there being some kind of relationship. The stress laid by Marx on underlying economic causes is by no means absurd and the search for economic motivation is certainly not irrelevant. But equally, the fact that there are matters of historical worth in Marxist writings on the past, and the fact that many historians have been stimulated by Marxist theories, does not mean that Marx is automatically offering us history which should

just be seen in terms of its coherence as a way of explaining past events. If, as I have suggested, Marx and Marxists are not interested in understanding the past for the purpose of illuminating what happened, but want to use the past for the purpose of shaping the present and controlling the future then they are engaged in a different enterprise: an enterprise that cannot be 'translated' into history proper without losing its own character. An analogy would be the way in which some matters of historical fact and detail are, no doubt, present in Shakespeare's history plays; but we could not 'translate' them into history without destroying their character as a work of art. Equally, there would be no way of 'translating' a rain dance into purely scientific (or even, possibly, anthropological) categories and still retaining its significance.

At the back of both Marx's views on history, economics and social organisation in general is a theory of human nature - about what it is to be 'really' human. As we have already noted, this is related to his view that Man is, first and foremost a producer, homo laborens, and that under capitalism he is alienated and estranged, both from the object of his work and from other workers. But it is difficult here to see a logical connection between an obvious metaphorical use of the term alienation (we could agree that the bright, grammar school educated university graduate from the north who finds success in London - so beloved of certain novelists - becomes alienated from his working class roots) and the more complex metaphysical uses to which it is sometimes put. Though I may feel alienated in Edinburgh, it is not entirely clear that this is because it confronts me, or I confront myself. Likewise, though it may be reprehensible not to support a strike and this may bring me into conflict with others, there is nothing in this which needs recourse to metaphysical theories of human nature.

We can see the sense in which a factory worker might be degraded by his job, but to say that his labour confronts him in the object he has created is surely to make a Rylean category mistake, for though my labour makes the table possible, it is not another ingredient along with the legs, top and glue.

Not only is the use of the concept of alienation a mixture of metaphor and metaphysics, it is not quite the neutral, descriptive term that is sometimes implied. It does, after all, depend upon a view of what the 'real needs' of a Man are. Not all needs, nor even felt needs, can be genuine - no matter how real they are felt to be. Advertising would be seen to exploit people in precisely this way, by convincing them that they really need a video recorder or whiter shirts. To fight for the realisation of those capacities that Marx and his followers deem to be those of 'real men' is, in this sense, to adopt a primarily moral attitude here. In a similar way, freedom is not just a description of legal relationships and all freedoms are not legitimate - the freedom to exploit, for example.

Some Marxists, those associated with the 'scientific' view of Marxism, often claim that terms such as exploitation are scientific and not moral terms, in the sense that Marx does not equate it with 'denying the dignity of the human being', but in explaining an economic relationship whereby surplus value is extracted from the worker. The two issues may indeed be separate, for feudal serfs were not exploited in the sense of having surplus value extracted, but were denied dignity; but this is beside the point, for the force of Marx's comments is that capitalism operates a rigged lottery by its manipulation of such terms as justice and fairness such that the extraction of profit from the worker by the capitalist can be seen as a legitimate (indeed, praiseworthy) enterprise.

The ability, in this sense, of Marxism to generate commitment to political, social and economic change depends on the way in which it can convince people that they are being cheated, that their lives will be transformed for the better if they act in a certain way.

It is only, we might add here, because Marxism does have a conception of human nature in quite a specific sense (ie not in a common sense, man in the street or top of bus way) that it can identify the problems of capitalism as problems at all. Alienation, exploitation and estrangement are not, as it were, separate from capitalism; they cannot be identified separately from it, or independently of it, in any Marxist account. They go together in the way that progress and Civil Society go together for Liberals such as J S Mill. As we shall see, this is connected with the way in which ideological accounts of the past differ and compete, for it is arguable that the ~~problems~~ the Marxist sees in capitalism are not mis-identified by the Liberal, but not seen as problems at all. Alienation is not something that we discover to have occurred in the past through painstaking historical research, it is something that we talk about only if we are Marxists, and not Liberals or Conservatives. Alienation, like the concept of sin for Christians, focuses attention on what, from a certain point of view, is significant in being human.

The implication of this is that whilst it is possible for ~~some~~ of the historical claims made by Marxists (eg "The rate of profit fell in the years leading up to the outbreak of the Great War") to be put to the test of evidence and hence to "objective" scrutiny, it would be misleading to see the whole enterprise in this way. For, as we have seen, the description of ~~w~~apitalism is not in the same form as the historians use of that term. It does not stand as a description of a

certain set of economic and legal relationships that pertain at a certain time, it also functions as an evaluative notion, such that anyone admitting X as an example of a capitalist society, cannot avoid the conclusion that it is exploitative and that Men are alienated within it. Thus, although a Marxist understanding of the past is related to certain events in the past having taken place, the relationship is not one of straightforward dependency.

III

Having looked in somewhat general terms at the relationship between the past in Marxism and other aspects of Marxism, it is time to consider some concrete examples that might illustrate these points more clearly. My intention here is to look at two authors from within the British Marxist tradition, E.P. Thompson and Perry Anderson. Both are concerned with the past and with the claims of 'historical materialism', and both have contributed extensively to Marxist literature in this area. I have chosen them because they quite clearly represent different approaches to the issue within Marxism, and have to a greater or lesser extent, formulated their positions in opposition to each other over a number of years. Equally important, they see their disagreements as being within Marxism, and as such, part of a 'comradely debate' rather than an engagement with political or ideological opponents. It is worth pointing out here that their interest in the past does stem from rather different concerns and comes from rather different directions. Thompson is, first and foremost, an historian, whose researches have been original. In describing himself as a Marxist, his claim is that 'historical materialism' is a useful tool for understanding the past - without wishing to see it reduced to the level of a rigid dogma. Anderson is, on the other hand, primarily a Marxist theoretician, who believes

that 'historical materialism' is the key (or part of the key) to the understanding of history as a process of transformation from feudalism, to capitalism, to socialism. As we shall see later on, one of his criticisms of Thompson's work is that he fails to appreciate the contemporary relevance of the past towards formulating the correct political strategy now. To that extent, I suggest, he is closer to what I have been describing as mainstream Marxist thought than is Thompson. Thompson has a rather 'softer' view of history. The difference between them might be expressed by saying that Thompson is a Marxist historian, whilst Anderson believes in Marxist history. Thompson's views can be amply illustrated by looking at two of his books, perhaps his best known works: 'The Making of the English Working Class'⁵² and 'The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays'⁵³. The former is a work which has received widespread praise from both professional historians, and fellow Socialists. The latter is a work concerned to a far greater degree with theoretical matters and inter-Socialist polemics. In particular it 'rubbishes' (I do not think that the phrase is too strong in this context) a number of fellow travellers including Anderson, his collaborator from the New Left Review, Tom Nairn and the prominent French Marxist, Louis Althusser. It is important to note that the polemical and theoretical elements in 'PT' are quite intentionally brought together; for Thompson sees, especially in the works of Althusser, not only conceptual confusion and bad history, but also the ghost of Stalinism lurking in the background. The practical consequences for British Socialists (so the argument runs) would be disastrous if they succumbed to

⁵² Penguin Edition, 1968 (hereafter referred to as MEWC)

⁵³ London, Merlin Press, 1978 (hereafter referred to as PT)

French irrationalism. In this sense, 'PT' is as much a part of the debate about the future of Socialism, and the form that working for Socialism in Britain might take, as it is a dispassionate look at some misconceptions about the role of evidence in historical writings.

Anderson does not claim to be an historian in the sense that Thompson does. Most of his work on the past is based upon the researches of others. His position will be illustrated by three works, 'Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism',⁵⁴ 'Lineages of the Absolutist State',⁵⁵ and 'Arguments within English Marxism',⁵⁶. The first two can be seen as parts of a single work, divided by chronology rather than methodology and the third is both a defence of Althusser against Thompson and the elaboration of a distinct position by Anderson himself. Again, it should be pointed out that in the more theoretical 'AWEM', polemic and argument are mixed together with a discussion of underlying political strategy.

'MEWC' is an enormous and detailed book, which was originally intended to be the first chapter of a short book on working class politics between 1790 and 1921. In fact, it covers the period from the French Revolution to the Great Reform Act of 1832, at the end of which period "The working class presence was ... the most significant factor in British political life".⁵⁷ The very weight of detail makes it difficult to summarise, and it must be recognised that these details are quite deliberate on Thompson's part, for he is "... seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver ... from the enormous condescension of posterity".⁵⁸

⁵⁴ London, New Left Books, (hereafter referred to as PAF)

⁵⁵ London, New Left Books, (hereafter referred to as LAS)

⁵⁶ London, Verso Books, 1980 (hereafter referred to as AWEM)

⁵⁷ Op cit., p12

⁵⁸ Ibid., p13

And one way to rebut the claim that working class history is of no interest or significance is indeed to quote chapter and verse in order to illustrate its vitality and intellectual standing.

Thus, Thompson looks in great detail at a number of intellectual and political currents that had emerged, or were emerging at the end of the eighteenth century. Starting with the London Corresponding Society ("... often been claimed as the first definitely working class political organisation formed in Britain"⁵⁹) he looks at the way in which the influence of Tom Paine, the rise of Methodism and the impact of the industrial revolution transformed a number of disparate organisations and causes into something that could be genuinely described as a class. This development is, he stresses, an historical phenomenon, rather than a category - it is something that happened. The main thesis of the book can be broken down, roughly speaking into three sections.

Firstly, Thompson looks at the agitation around democratic reforms, fueled by the French Revolution and Paine's 'The Rights of Man' which, he argues reached a high point around 1792 in terms of co-operation between "intellectuals and plebians".⁶⁰ Radicals such as John Thelwall⁶¹ saw in 'manufactory' a potential centre of political rebellion,⁶² but the history of agitation between 1792 and 1796 was "the story of the simultaneous default of the middle class reformers and the rapid 'leftward' movement of the plebian Radicals".⁶³

Secondly, he looks at the relationship between changes in productive methods and the development of the working class. The most common

⁵⁹ Ibid , p167

⁶⁰ Ibid , pp110ff

⁶¹ Ibid , p172

⁶² Ibid , p172

⁶³ Ibid , p200

thesis in this area (claims Thompson) is the simple equation that steam power + cotton mills = new working class.⁶⁴ As Thompson puts it:

The physical instruments of production were seen as giving rise in a direct and more or less compulsive way to new social relationships, institutions and cultural modes ... It is, perhaps, the scale and intensity of this multiform popular agitation which has, more than anything else, given rise (among contemporary observers and historians alike) the sense of some catastrophic change.⁶⁵

But he is wary of too quick a judgement.

We should not assume any automatic, or over-direct, correspondence between the dynamic of economic growth and the dynamic of social or cultural life. For half a century after the 'breakthrough' of the cotton mill (around 1780) the mill workers remained a minority of the adult labour force in the cotton industry itself ... in 1830, the adult male cotton spinner was no more typical of that elusive figure, 'the average working man', than is the Coventry motor-worker of the 1960's.⁶⁶

The radical movements, which might be seen as expressions of the new working class, he points out, also drew strength from a host of smaller trades and occupations. The important point for Thompson is that:

...when every caution has been made, the outstanding fact of the period between 1790 and 1830 is the formation of the 'working class'. This is revealed, first, in the growth of class consciousness: the consciousness of an identity of interests between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interests of other classes. And second, in the growth of corresponding forms of political and industrial organisation. By 1832 there were strongly based and self-conscious working-class institutions ... and a working class structure of feeling. The making of the working class is a fact of political and cultural, as much as economic history. It was not the spontaneous generation of the factory system... The working class made itself as much as it was made.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ MEWC, p209

⁶⁵ Ibid, p209

⁶⁶ Ibid, p211

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp212-213

These comments tie in with other remarks made in the preface by Thompson, especially the comment about the working class being present at its own meeting.⁶⁸

Thompson's view is of some interest here; for although he argues against those whom he accuses of seeing the working class as a 'thing', he agrees that the working class does exist as a component of social structure - it is not an abstraction or convenient collective noun. He also argues that class consciousness is the way in which the working class handles experiences in cultural terms rather than the product of an objective relationship between worker and productive forces. Thus, even if experience is determined, class consciousness is not.

We can see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way.⁶⁹

In the end, he writes "it is the political context as much as the steam engine, which had the most influence on the shaping consciousness and institutions of the working class"⁷⁰. The reasons that Thompson brings forward for the working class evolving in the way it did include both economic exploitation and political oppression, or rather the perception felt by the emerging class of these two factors. The first point leads directly to the question 'did wage levels and the standard of living decline during the industrial revolution?' and thus to the question of exploitation.

The importance of this question is the way in which it apparently links an evaluation of a certain kind, 'exploitation' with a factual debate; for surely it is possible to resolve the question as to

⁶⁸ Ibid, p8

⁶⁹ Ibid, p9

⁷⁰ Ibid, p216

whether wage levels and/or standards of living decreases for the working class during this period. As we shall see later on, the question is far more complex than this.

Having examined the various social groupings within the working class, their life style, their religion and finally their life outside of work, Thompson turns to his third section, in which he looks at how the working class started to make its presence felt as an organised force. Here he draws our attention to the fact that the period can reasonably be divided into two distinct eras, the first from the French Revolution to the end of the French War (1790 - 1815) and the second from Waterloo to the Reform Act of 1832. The particular importance that Thompson sees in this break is the qualitative difference in post-Waterloo radicalism.

This radicalism was not (as in the 1790's) a minority propaganda, identified with a few organisations and writers. After 1815 the claims of Rights of Man had little novelty; they were now assumed.⁷¹

The years leading up to Peterloo in 1819 were the high point, the 'heroic age' of popular radicalism. But to repeat the point, it was not just the increased level of activity that characterised the later period, it was during this period that the working class started to develop an alternative system of organising work and society. This came through the birth of Unions, experiments such as Owenite socialism and the start of the co-operative movement. The analysis of society that stemmed from the movement is worth noting.

Fundamental Principles

First - that labour is the source of all wealth; consequently, the working classes have created all wealth.

⁷¹ Ibid, p611

Secondly - that the working classes, although the producers of wealth, instead of being the richest, are the poorest of the community; hence, they cannot be receiving a just recompense for their labour.⁷² (Emphasis in original)

And it is the specific nature of this analysis and working class action to secure it that leads Thompson to claim that it amounts to 'working class consciousness'; both by virtue of the identity of interest between working men thus established, and by its institutional forms.⁷³ At the end of 'MEWC' Thompson returns to the theme that it is the birth of 'collective self-consciousness' that was the great spiritual gain of the industrial revolution and that this must be set against the loss of a way of life which, had, perhaps, been more human.⁷⁴ We may say, therefore, that the central point of Thompson's argument is that the birth, or making of the working class is characterised precisely by an awareness of that phenomenon, rather than the mere existence of certain identifiable economic factors.

The way in which Thompson sees the argument of 'MEWC' related to Marxism is developed (though not always explicitly) in 'PT'. Thompson is, I think, concerned to do three things in 'PT'. Firstly, he wants to look at those factors which make history the disciplined inquiry that it is; secondly, he wishes to show that 'historical materialism' (as he conceives it) is quite compatible with those canons, and thirdly, to show that the approach of Althusser and his disciples leads to vacuity and sterility - for such an approach never engages in the real world at all, it is always stuck at the level of abstraction. For Thompson, this amounts to both a critical

⁷² Ibid, p873

⁷³ Ibid, p888

⁷⁴ Ibid, p913

examination of the Marxist tradition and, at a political level, a coming to grips with the crisis within international communism since 1956.

(i) History, for Thompson, is a distinct type of inquiry that cannot be replaced by, say, science. The adequacy of any historical account is directly related to the concept of valid evidence and to the concept of coherence. Thus any account may be criticised at two levels - either in terms of its factual inadequacy or in terms of its conceptual confusion.⁷⁵ The two levels do, however, come together. An example of this would be the question of historical evidence and how it is to be interpreted. Thompson is very clear that evidence does not just present itself as a series of brute facts for the historian to uncover like nuggets in the desert. Evidence is both the creation of a particular time and place (and hence must be understood in terms of that time and place) and must be subject to the critical scrutiny of the historian, who does not necessarily take it at face value. Thus there is a relationship between fact and interpretation, such that both move together. An analogy might be between the fact that there is a relationship between the categories through which we understand the world (and without which no understanding at all would be possible) and empirical facts that set limits upon those categories. As Thompson puts it:

That facts are there, inscribed in the historical record, with determinate properties, does not, of course, entail some notion that these facts disclose their meanings and relationships (historical knowledge) of themselves, and independently of theoretical procedures ... The historical evidence is there, in its primary form, not to disclose its own meaning, but to be interrogated by minds trained in a discipline of attentive disbelief.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ PT, p303

⁷⁶ Ibid, p220

His criticism of Nairn and Anderson, contained in the essay 'The Peculiarities of the English',⁷⁷ is that they are so concerned with setting models of historical activity, and delineating 'ideal' forms of revolution, that they completely fail to do justice to the actual evidence that is available. In particular, the use of a model, suggests Thompson, will only pre-determine the answers that the evidence will give, and may blind the historian to all kinds of connections that can and should be made. In short, Nairn and Anderson are not engaging in genuine history at all but looking for the answers that their model already predisposes them towards.⁷⁸ And hence their story tells us nothing.

The criticism of Althusser is much more vehement. Althusser is not interested in history at all ("His comments display throughout no acquaintance with, nor understanding of, historical procedures ...")⁷⁹ and this leads him to the error of claiming that 'real' history is unknowable and therefore, non-existent.⁸⁰ Althusser's most astonishing claim is, according to Thompson:

We should say the same of the science that concerns us most particularly: historical materialism. It has been possible to apply Marx's theory with success because it is 'true'; it is not true because it has been applied with success.⁸¹

⁷⁷Ibid, pp35-91

⁷⁸Ibid, pp77ff

⁷⁹Ibid, p209

⁸⁰Ibid, p194

⁸¹Ibid, p208

This, for Thompson, is an exact reversal of the truth, and takes us on to the second point - the compatibility of 'historical materialism' with the canons of historical reasoning. For Thompson, Althusser seems to give up almost every empirical claim that Marxists might consider to be important. As the above quotation shows, Althusser is claiming that the grounds for supporting Marx's view of history are non-historical.⁸²

This claim goes even deeper, for Althusser is, apparently, at great pains to argue that 'Capital' is not about history either.

Despite appearances, Marx does not analyse any 'concrete society', not even England which he constantly mentions in Volume One, but the CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION and nothing else... We must not imagine that Marx is analysing a concrete situation in England when he discusses it. He only discusses it in order to 'illustrate' his (abstract) theory of the capitalist mode of production.⁸³

Thompson, on the other hand, sees 'Historical materialism' as one of the most important legacies within the Marxist tradition, precisely because it is empirical and, therefore, open to criticism from the canons of historical logic. Indeed, he argues that historical materialism is not derived from a broader philosophical framework but is, itself, the common ground for all Marxist practice. This does not mean that it derives nothing from the activities of Marxists within other disciplines, but that in the end all Marxist roads lead back to historical materialism. This means that the Marxist view of history does not differ from history on any epistemological grounds, but only in terms of its characteristic hypotheses and the categories that it uses (e.g. class). As he puts the matter "The court has been sitting in judgement upon historical materialism for one hundred years and is continually being adjourned. The adjournment is in effect a

⁸² This is, of course, Thompson's version of Althusser. Whether or not it is accurate is another matter

⁸³ Ibid, p215

tribute to the robustness of the tradition".⁸⁴ One point worth mentioning here, since Thompson specifically brings it in to the discussion about the principles of 'historical materialism' is that of judgement in history. Thompson is quite certain that there are correct historical procedures for 'recovering' what happened in the past - though historical knowledge is always provisional and always falls short of positive proof - but that once the past has been recovered, we are quite entitled to judge it as if it were the present. Thus we can shake hands with Swift and Oppose Walpole: and although this will change nothing in the past it can change everything for us, because it allows us to assert those values which give history meaning for us, and which we intend to enlarge and sustain in the present.⁸⁵

Historical materialism is then, 'true' because it stands up to the test of evidence, and not because it is derived elsewhere from a 'true' theory.

The final point I wish to discuss in relation to Thompson's argument in 'PT' is the way in which he sees Marxist history and Marxism. I have already suggested that this is one area where he and Anderson differ. Thompson is quick to condemn the decline of 'historical materialism' into dogma, and makes plain that it is not his intention to defend Marx on each and every occasion.

(Our) exploration may still be within the Marxist tradition, in the sense that we are taking some of Marx's hypotheses and central concepts, and setting these to work. But the end of this exploration is not the discovery of a (reformed) finite conceptual system, Marxism ... There is no innermost altar that is sacrosanct against interrogation and revision.

Here lies the difference between Marxism and the Marxist tradition. It is possible to practice as a Marxist and to find Marxisms obscurantisms ...

⁸⁴ Ibid, p237

⁸⁵ For the general outlines of the argument see Ibid, pp231-238

For Marxism I would not fight ...⁸⁶

What in fact Althusser and his disciples have done is to put Marx into the prison of Marxism⁸⁷ and by creating a Marxism of 'closure' (that is a theory that is safely hidden away from uncomfortable empirical evidence or logical criticism) they have turned Marxism into an ideology of the present day. Thus Thompson ends by revising his argument in 'An Open Letter to Lezek Kolakowski'⁸⁸ and claiming that Marxism is no longer a single tradition, but has split in ~~two~~. This break came about (in practical terms) in 1956 and there is no middle ground for compromise or discussion. The only thing that libertarian socialists can do with the 'theoretical practice' of Althussarians is expose it and drive it out.⁸⁹ "If I thought," writes Thompson, "that Althussarianism was the logical terminus of Marxism, then I could never be a Marxist."⁹⁰ All of this is in the polemical tradition of Burke and Paine. What then of Anderson? Let us start by examining what he has to say in 'PAF' and 'LAS'. He is quite clear that neither of these works is, in the conventional sense, history.

It is necessary, however, to stress at the outset the limited and provisional character of the accounts presented in each work. The scholarship and skills of the professional historian are absent from them. Historical writing in the proper sense is inseparable from direct research into original records of the past ... The studies below have no claim to this dignity.⁹¹

Indeed,

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp359-361

⁸⁷ Ibid, p362

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp92-192

⁸⁹ Ibid, p381

⁹⁰ Ibid, p381

⁹¹ 'PAF', p8

The discussion for which they are designed is primarily one within the field of historical materialism.⁹²

This is because

It has been a general phenomenon of the last decades that Marxist historians... have not always been directly concerned with the theoretical questions of implications raised by their work. At the same time, Marxist philosophers, who have sought to clarify or to solve the basic theoretical problems of historical materialism, have often done so at a considerable remove from the specific empirical questions posed by historians. ...the aim of this study is to examine European Absolutism simultaneously 'in general' and 'in particular': that is to say, both the 'pure' structures of the Absolutist State ... and the 'impure' variants presented by the specific and diverse monarchies of post-mediaeval Europe.⁹³

Thus Anderson covers the period from classical antiquity to 1917 in a range of countries from Greece to Japan and from Russia to Turkey, in considerably fewer pages than it takes Thompson to take us from 1790 to 1832 in England. This in itself is instructive, for Anderson is far less concerned with the detail of events than with the global theory that they contribute towards. And at the back of his mind is always the question *how* can this study be integrated into the general corpus of Marxist theory? I shall not, therefore, follow the steps of Anderson's voyage first from antiquity to Feudalism and then from Feudalism to the Absolutist State, in the same way that I have traced the argument in Thompson. Anderson's work does not invite such treatment. If we look at 'PAF' and his conclusions in 'LAS', then the general picture he is trying to create becomes clearer.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid, p9

⁹³ 'LAS', pp7-8

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp397-431

The Roman Empire collapsed because of, or rather, was determined by, the dynamic of the slave mode of production and its contradictions, once Imperial expansion was halted.⁹⁵ The symbiosis of Roman and Germanic social formations produced a cataclysmic collision and fusion from which Feudalism emerged in Western Europe.⁹⁶ Feudalism started to emerge in the 10th century, expanded in the 11th and 12th centuries, and reached its zenith in the 13th century.⁹⁷ 'Full' feudalism was born into the former Carolingian lands of Western Europe, and spread slowly and unevenly out to England, Spain, Scandinavia and finally - in a less perfect form - to Eastern Europe.⁹⁸ A unique feature which transcended the period was, of course, the Church - overarching the period at a cultural rather than social or economic level. The feudal mode of production, unlike the slave mode, or capitalism, had no imperialist pretensions.⁹⁹ It was moreover, with one exception (Japan) a mode of production that was confined to Europe and never appeared outside it.

At the Renaissance, a dramatic change took place, there was the historical turning point at which Europe outdistanced all other continents in dynamism and expansion. The new and singular type of State that arose in this epoch was Absolutism, and the absolute monarchies of this period were a European phenomenon.¹⁰⁰ The basic characteristic which divided the Absolute monarchies of Europe from, say the despotism of the Sultans or Shoguns was the way in which "the

⁹⁵ 'PAF', p266

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp110-111

⁹⁷ Ibid, p182

⁹⁸ 'LAS', p411

⁹⁹ Ibid, p411

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p428

increase in political sway of the Royal State was accompanied, not by a decrease in the economic security of noble land-ownership, but by a corresponding increase in the rights of private property".¹⁰¹ Subsequently, Absolutism emerged in Eastern Europe but in a different way, for Eastern Europe had no urban bourgeoisie and still retained a feudal 'cast' of state.¹⁰² As the various Absolutist states formed, the international system of rival states came into existence at a political level, but this did not render Europe into an homogeneous whole "On the contrary, representing distinct historical lineages from the start, the Absolutist States of Western and Eastern Europe followed divergent trajectories down to their respective conclusions." These were the overthrow of the Western monarchies by the bourgeois and the overthrow of the Tzar by proletarian revolution.¹⁰³ As we have already noted, Anderson's story is quite a general one - it is in fact part of a history of everything, and the temptation is to say that this is because he feels that this enterprise is necessary to both outline and to justify the Marxist historical programme. Anything and everything can be explained. At this point it is worth letting Anderson explain how and why he differs (as a Marxist), from Thompson. This argument is contained in 'AWEM'. It falls into four parts, an investigation of the nature of historical inquiry, the role of human agency in history, the nature of Marxism and the phenomenon of Stalinism. There are three main areas of disagreement in terms of the nature of historical inquiry. Firstly, Anderson argues that Thompson's invocation of the principle of falsification does make it akin to the sciences, since falsification is the key to Popper's definition of

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p429

¹⁰² Ibid, p430

¹⁰³ Ibid, p431

scientific activity. Secondly, he denies that history is, or should be, the Queen of the humanities, and thirdly, he resists Thompson's argument about the approximate nature of historical knowledge.

Some historical facts, such as the date of the October Revolution are as certain as anything.¹⁰⁴ There then follows, in the discussion of agency in history an attack upon what Anderson sees as three major theses in 'MEWC' - that the working class made itself as much as it was made, that consciousness is the key to understanding class, and that the working class had been 'made' by 1832. Now if ~~the~~ the first proposition Thompson means that the working class was not merely the necessary creation of a change in the forces of production, but welded itself together through its own agency, Anderson suggests that by omitting the impact of certain sectors in the industrial revolution, the financier/rentier configuration of London, and the impact of the American and French Revolutions, he leaves the reader unable to judge the issue¹⁰⁵ and "the parity between agency and necessity ... is never really tested"¹⁰⁶. As ~~far~~ as the second point of dispute is concerned, Anderson is content to cite Cohen's recent book¹⁰⁷ on Marx's view of history to demonstrate that the correct Marxist position is that class is everything to do with an objective relationship to the means of production, and nothing to do with a sense of identity, at least as far as the definition of class is concerned. Thirdly, Anderson argues that Tom Nairn is correct in seeing two ~~phases~~ in the history of the working class - the first phase which Thompson describes and then a second phase of moderate and supine reformism. Thus the working class could not have been 'made' in 1832 since it was so dramatically transformed in

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p431

¹⁰⁵ AWEM, p38

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p38

¹⁰⁷ G. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: a defence, Oxford, O.U.P., 1979

the latter part of that century. It is the lack of a connection between these phases, the discontinuity of the story, that we should stress instead of the continuity in development that Thompson seeks to establish.

It is clear that Anderson's criticisms are also about the inadequate base within Marxism in Thompson's ideas. Perhaps the most fundamental criticism is that he equates 'history' with the 'past' and that 'historical materialism' is assimilated to 'the practice of writing history'.¹⁰⁸ Though Thompson claims that the major strength of historical materialism is its adequacy as an account of the past, the 'founders' of 'historical materialism' had quite another aim in mind.

For historical materialism ...was also 'scientific socialism', in other words the enterprise of understanding the present and mastering the future - a political project at one with the idea of proletarian revolution. In this perspective, historical materialism is not confined to, nor even over-whelmingly concentrated upon, the past. The history with which it is concerned is at least equally the present. Indeed, what else is Capital actually orientated towards? Its essential 'empirical' reference point is that of the English economy in the 1860's.¹⁰⁹

And again,

one of the central purposes of understanding the past is to provide a causal knowledge of historical processes capable of furnishing the basis for an adequate political practice in the present ... This is the ambition of the Communist Manifesto.¹¹⁰

Thompson's approach leads him into a dangerous moralism, in which the judgements he makes and proclaims - condemning Walpole and praising Swift - simply detract from the real importance of such characters on the stage of history. For "historical materialism, as for socialist politics, what the past bequeaths the present is first and

¹⁰⁸ Op.cit., p84

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp84-85

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p85

foremost a set of lines of force for transformation, not a gallery of model lives for imitation."¹¹¹

How ~~wre~~ we to understand these two authors, their disputes, and their relevance to our discussion on Marxism and the past? It should be remembered here that the purpose of this section is to outline their respective views rather than to criticise them.

For Thompson, the main attraction of historical materialism is in the way that it helps us to understand the past through offering serviceable categories which enable us to make sense of the evidence that is presented to us. Thus class is a useful concept in terms of explaining the collective actions of individuals in a given epoch though it is noticable that Thompson has far less to say about the concepts of, say, alienation and exploitation, except to see them as justifiable moral judgements for describing the reality of Georgian and Victorian England. Such concepts are not sacred dogmas and must bow to the evidence. Part of the problem here is that the evidence may or may not be conclusive (or to put the matter in Popperspeak, there may be no decisive refutation available): it may be provisional or ambiguous, in which case it is scarcely surprising that the court of history is still sitting in judgement. An example of this difficulty is the question Thompson himself raises about wage levels during the industrial revolution, did they rise or fall? As he indicates, the question admits of no general answer. Not only did different sections of the working class fare differently, but the examination of different periods within the industrial revolution will produced different results. In short, a whole range of evidence does not point conclusively in either direction. There are two points that this raises in connection with Marxism. Firstly, the concept of class or

¹¹¹ Ibid, p98

even of exploitation could hardly hang in the air for Marxists whilst they awaited the judgement of history (it is still the concept that shapes the evidence and not vice versa) and secondly, such agnosticism would simply produce acute political paralysis rather than fueling the embers of revolutionary praxis. Thompson is, I believe, wrong in not recognising that the concepts logically precede the evidence, rather than being derived from it. The plausibility of the explanation, even if it cannot be entirely convincing gives the impression that the evidence is more important than it in fact is.

One of the interesting impressions gained from Thompson's work is that his Marxism is much more obvious in his theoretical writings than in his historical works. I tend to agree here with Anderson and Cohen that Thompson's view, especially of class consciousness is a very different one from that in Marx. The concept of the 'working class' seems to fulfil an heuristic, rather than a Marxist' role in 'MEWC'.

Whatever the relationship between the two in Thompson's work, the case of Anderson is very different. With Anderson the question that really needs to be asked is "To what extent is his work history at all ?" His own admission of not doing any original research is, in fact, a major flaw; for surely we want to say that the establishment of historical truth cannot be done wholly by proxy. How does Anderson know that the facts of the period he describes supports his analysis without having found out at least some of the facts for himself ? We can only assume that in choosing works that support his analysis, Anderson is begging the question. Racing through the past in this way is unlikely to convince anyone who is not already in agreement with Anderson already. The effect of Anderson's way of treating the past

is rather like that of a fast train going through the countryside, where everything is reduced to an indistinguishable blur for the passengers.

Moreover, as we have seen, the examination of the past is secondary to questions within, or about, Marxism itself. His study is primarily intended to resolve questions about the gap between the abstract and the concrete within Marxist theory. In other words, its role is within the Marxist jigsaw as of greater importance than discovering what happened in 18NN. The talk about 'pure' absolutist states (or their form) is indicative here, for it sets the category of the 'absolutist' state above the evidence required bring 'impure' manifestations of that state into being. It is hard to imagine what evidence could be brought to dissuade Anderson from his analysis, and hence is question begging.

Finally, Anderson specifically links the past to both the present and the future in terms of political action. Thompson does not specifically indulge in this; he judges the past as if it were the present (e.g. he makes the decision to side with Swift and against Walpole) and in doing so brings that judgement into an atemporal moral realm in which an action and our reaction are logically related by moral values and not contingently related by time.¹¹² Anderson flattens the chronology by rendering past and future as extensions of the present, but as we have already seen (see Chapter 2) this does not make the relationship atemporal in the way that a moral judgement is, it merely makes it absurd; for the present can always give rise to a past and future that are acceptable to it in terms of justifying our current activities.

¹¹² Though it might be argued that his choice of period (18th and 19th century working class history) gives maximum prominence to his own notions of the 'heroic period' in working class history.

Let me recap by saying; firstly, at the outset of this chapter I tried to indicate that there are limits to which any summary of Marxism can cover all the alternatives on offer. This chapter has not been intended as an exhaustive trip around world Marxism, but to locate strands and arguments that are advanced by a substantial number of Marxists and cannot, therefore, be dismissed as straw men. Secondly, there are those who would say that if Marxism fails to live up to the standards of history when talking about the past then it is unfalsifiable and, therefore, intellectually valueless. Even if this were so, and even if it is impossible to recall the past as history (pace Oakeshott) in a way that will be useful to present endeavours, it does not follow that Marxist writings on the past are incoherent or nonsense. As I have tried to show, they are 'historical' in content (in the sense that the people and events in them are not made up unlike, say, a mythical understanding of the past such as the Book of Genesis where the people and events are fictional - or mythological) but not in form. They belong to an ideological understanding of the past that has a different aim and purpose, to move adherents and the uncommitted to action.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

As one might expect of an ideology that places the liberty of the individual conscience at its heart, there is no single version of Liberal doctrine. In the introduction to their book "The Liberal Tradition", Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock draw our attention to what they term 'the intellectual incoherence' of Liberalism.¹ By this, they simply mean that not only have Liberals disagreed on matters of policy - that is to say, whether or not law X or proposal Y will advance Liberal values - but also on matters of principle. They have disagreed over what real Liberal values are. Thus Robert Paul Wolfe, in 'The Poverty of Liberalism'² is quite wrong in equating Liberalism with Utilitarianism; for it can be legitimately claimed that Locke, T H Green, L T Hobhouse and Lord Macaulay were all Liberals, though not Utilitarians. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine two more opposed moral doctrines than Mill's 'principle of utility' and Green's notion of 'moral self-realisation'. Maurice Cranston makes a similar point when he states that Liberals were all in favour of freedom, but could not agree as to what 'freedom' consisted of.³ Even so, it would I think be mistaken to argue on the basis of this (as Plamenatz seems to) that there must either be an agreed ancestor for all Liberals (Locke) or that Liberalism is not a single ideology at all.⁴ Locke may indeed have been a prominent figure

¹ A Bullock and M Shock, The Liberal Tradition: From Fox to Keynes (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), xix.

² R P Wolfe, The Poverty of Liberalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

³ M Cranston, see his entry on Liberalism in The Dictionary of Philosophy (London: Macmillan, 1967) and Freedom: A new Analysis (London: Longmans, 1953).

⁴ J Plamenatz, Readings from Liberal Writers (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965).

in Liberal history, but it is not obvious that all true Liberals must therefore be Lockians; nor does it follow from the fact that there are several varieties of Liberalism that there are several Liberalisms. One fact that counts against such a view is that contributors to the Liberal tradition of writing, such as L T Hobhouse in his book "Liberalism",⁵ even when disagreeing with the premises of another Liberal's arguments (Mill, for example) still sees himself as debating with other Liberals and contributing to a single tradition, rather than as defending Liberalism against a rival doctrine such as Socialism. In this sense, the contributions of Mill, Hobhouse or Green are statements of possible Liberal arguments that may at any particular time fall into disrepute or be replaced by others that see, in the circumstances, more plausible or effective.

Though the actual term 'Liberal' does not appear till the second decade of the 19th century, being a term of abuse and applied to those who were sympathetic to the Liberales in the Spanish Cortes, the sources of inspiration for Liberals go back into the 17th century at least, where several of Liberalisms characteristic themes were given a theoretical expression by Milton and Locke. In "Areopagitica", Milton⁶ is concerned to establish the claims of liberty of conscience in religious belief and to oppose censorship. He contrasts England with its concern for liberty of thought with what he saw as the stultifying effects of Catholicism and the Inquisition on the continent. Milton was careful

⁵ L T Hobhouse, Liberalism, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964). First published by the Home University Library in 1911.

⁶ J Milton, Areopagitica, in The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), Vol 4, 293-354.

to exclude Catholics and atheists from the category of those allowed to follow their conscience, though in fairness to him this was not because of their beliefs but because of the Catholic Church, which prevented any English Catholic from being a good citizen by claiming an allegiance to the Pope that was prior to any allegiance to the civil authority. Locke too was in favour of toleration in religious matters, arguing in effect that although a person could be cured by a medicine they had no faith in, they could only be saved through a religion that had their assent. Locke and Milton both base their arguments on an assumption that is absent in the writings of most later Liberals, namely the existence of God. They are both theologically based Liberals. Thus Locke argued against Filmer that all men, as rational creatures, have a filial relationship to God and that the king is in no special position as the intermediary between the will of God and the rest of the human race. The subject therefore, as a rational God-fearing creature has the right to resist the attacks of the wicked on God's world, even if the opponent is the king himself. Government for Locke is held on trust from God and any projects that go against the law of God have no ultimate legitimacy. It is clear from this that Locke's criterion for human morality is not historical or culture relative but rooted in an ahistorical notion of 'human nature' or 'natural law'.⁷

Some of the rights that Locke took to be God given and unalienable, freedom of conscience, the right to private property and so on were particularly influential amongst the founding fathers of the United States and the authors of its constitution such as Jefferson. Those who have followed this particular path may be said to represent the minimalist

⁷ See for example J Locke., Two Treatises of Government (introduced by P Lazlett) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

strand of Liberal thought on the subject of government. The best known exponent of this argument is probably Adam Smith, who argued that as supremely rational agents men were capable of articulating and organising their desires and that the interplay of these diverse desires would lead, via his famous 'invisible hand', to the general benefit of all.

Every individual is continually exerting himself to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital he can command. It is his own advantage, indeed, and not that of the society, which he has in view. But the study of his own advantage naturally, or rather necessarily, leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to the society.⁸

Government interference, over and above the provision of a framework for the interplay of market forces through the law, applied without favour to all, can only distort the delicate mechanism of the market and upset it.

It is thus that every system which endeavours, either by extraordinary encouragements to draw towards a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than would naturally go to it, or, by extraordinary restraints, force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it, is in reality subversive to the great purpose which it means to promote ... All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simply system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way ... According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to; first, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies: secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member and, thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain; because the profit could never repay the expense to any individual

⁸ Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (Everyman Edition), Vol. I, 398.

or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society.⁹

It is this aspect of Liberalism that still finds favour with modern American Liberals such as Friedman.

It may be interesting to note at this point the fact that such views are associated in the 20th century with Conservatism more than Liberalism. It is ironic that Mr Enoch Powell who, before his conversion to the cause of Ulster Unionism, has always been regarded as a 'true' conservative (compared to Heath or Sir Edward Boyle) should be, in economic matters, a disciple of the Liberal, Adam Smith. The story of how this transformation has come about is beyond my competence, but it is certainly true that the decline of Liberalism as a political force has led to its being 'squeezed' on either wing by Socialists and Conservatives, and this in turn has increased its inability to define for itself and potential adherents a position that is distinctive from, on the one hand, Fabian Socialism, and on the other, free market Conservatism. That is to say, it is an acute problem for modern Liberalism to reclaim arguments and policies adopted by its rivals and thereby to reassert its political independence as an intellectual force. It was this problem that was the subject of J M Keynes' address "Am I a Liberal?"¹⁰ in 1925, in which he held out for a party 'disinterested as between classes' that avoided Socialism and Conservatism. My suggestion is that Liberalism has become blurred at the edges and cannot put sufficient distance between itself and its ideological rivals

⁹ Ibid., Vol II, 180-1.

¹⁰ Address to a Liberal Summer School, reprinted in J M Keynes, Collected Works (London: Macmillan, 1972), Vol ix.

on either side. An example of this lack of distance on one border may be found in the ease with which Dr Rhodes Bryson made the step between Cobdenite Liberalism of the 'Manchester School' and Thatcherite Conservatism. Finally, it is also worth noting that the Anarchist William Godwin started out as a Liberal who believed in a minimum of government intervention, and moved, not towards Conservatism, but to the stance of actually abandoning government altogether. Fortunately for Liberalism, such examples are rare.

But, as the Bullock and Shock collection makes clear, not all Liberals have been either disciples of Locke or believers in 'laissez-faire' economics. In the 19th and 20th centuries another strand of Liberal thought has developed around the idea of positive freedom. It is this section of Liberal thought that is expressed in Hobhouse's book and in the economic writings of Keynes. Hobhouse, for example, though committed to the preservation of individual liberty and freedom, did not see them merely in terms of what was left over once the government had its say. Freedom was not just the area in which the government did not interfere. Indeed, liberty and freedom were things that the government could promote through its legislation, in particular by ensuring equality of opportunity (which, given the entrenched social hierarchy of capitalism, could only be done through state intervention). Hobhouse saw Mill's distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding actions as a product of 'the old individualism' and suggested that the real distinction was between coercive and non-coercive actions, the function of the state being to override individual coercion and to prevent the 'general will' being frustrated by recalcitrant individuals. "The object of compulsion" he wrote "is to secure the most favourable

conditions for inward growth and happiness so far as these conditions depend upon combined action and uniform observance".¹¹ A similar view was held by T H Green

... the mere removal of compulsion, the mere enabling a man to do as he likes, is in itself no contribution to true freedom ...

If I have given a true account of that freedom which forms the goal of social effort, we shall see that freedom of contract, freedom in all the forms of doing what one will with one's own, is valuable only as a means to an end. That end is what I call freedom in the positive sense: in other words, the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good. No one has a right to do what he will with his own in such a way as to contravene this end ... Could the enlightened self-interest of individuals, working under a system of unlimited freedom of contract, have ever brought (the suffering classes) into a state compatible with the free development of the human faculties? No one considering the facts can have any doubt as to the answer to this question ... Ask yourself what chance there was of a generation, born and bred under such conditions, ever contracting itself out of them.¹²

As has been noted, interventionist Liberalism is perhaps best represented in our own century by J M Keynes, who believed that government spending should be used to 'even out' the fluctuations of the market and prevent the slump/boom cycles which characterised 'laissez-faire' economic theory. K Keynes, who was definitely not a Socialist, feared that recurrent depressions would push the masses who bore the brunt of economic hardship into Socialism and thereby lead to the destruction of democracy and liberty. It is perhaps another of the paradoxes of Liberalism that some of Keynes' arguments

¹¹ Op. cit., 147.

¹² T H Green, Liberal legislation or freedom of contract, quoted in Bullock and Shock, op. cit., 181-3.

might have been written with Adam Smith in mind.

Let us clear from the ground the metaphysical or general principles upon which, from time to time, laissez-faire has been founded. It is not true that individuals possess a prescriptive 'national liberty' in their economic activities. ... The world is not so governed from above that private and social interest always coincide. It is not so managed here below that in practice they coincide. It is not a correct deduction from the Principles of Economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally is enlightened ...

13

Keynes wanted economic units to be of a size between the individual and the State, which would both give individual flair and energy a chance to blossom whilst preventing the worst excesses of 19th century capitalism.

If the 'free market' doctrines of Liberalism have been taken over by Conservatives, those of limited state intervention have been taken over by Social Democrats. Keynesian policies are at the heart of the programmes of Western Socialist parties such as those of Germany and Britain and the idea of positive freedom can be seen in such recent Labour legislation as the Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Acts and the notion of 'positive discrimination' in schools. These ideas, or rather the philosophical presuppositions behind such ideas do not start with Keynes; in the writings of Bentham one can see a doctrine similar to that of Fabian Socialism being developed. The idea of establishing a minimum standard of living, the mixed economy, the limited redistribution of wealth and economic gradualism are all

¹³ 'The End of Laissez-faire' reprinted in Essays in Persuasion, op cit.

to be found in his writings.¹⁴ There is, it should be noted, a tension in Bentham's writings between the claims of individualism and of 'welfarism' which is also present in Liberalism as a whole. Such tensions do not mean that Liberalism is like a theory that contains a contradiction, it means that the capacity of all Liberals to act in concert for a particular aim is diminished. Such tensions are the lifeblood of internal ideological disputes.

But, even accepting the considerable differences involved, there are still persistent themes that have marked Liberalism's passage through time. Though Liberals have given very different answers, they have seen some rivals as fellow members of a common tradition (Hobhouse's attitude to Mill) rather than as members of a rival family (Hobhouse's attitude to Marx). Amongst the most persistent of these themes are liberty, progress, balance, reason and the importance of the individual. They are not isolated judgements, but part of a wider whole.

For example, in general, Liberals regard the individual as the basic building block of society. It can in fact be argued that until the advent of Liberalism¹⁵ there was no understanding of 'the individual' as a political phenomenon, in the same way that there were no classes before Marxism.¹⁶ Mediaeval political theorists, for example, seem to have regarded individuals merely as parts of an organic whole and do not discuss, at least in the sense understood by Liberals, the rights of the individual in relation to those of the state. Cases such as

¹⁴ For an account of this see D J Manning, The Mind of Jeremy Bentham (London: Longmans, 1968), Chapter 17.

¹⁵ I do not mean that Liberalism has a starting date in time. I am referring here to the first theoretical expressions of Liberal ideas.

¹⁶ That is to say, there were no classes before Marx in the same way that there were no sinners before religion, or for the sake of controversy, no Oedipus complexes before Freud.

those of Sir Thomas More, and perhaps more clearly that of Thomas a Beckett, were not about the rights of the individual conscience but about the rights of God as opposed to those of the state.¹⁷

The nature of the individual is, for Liberals, universal. That is to say, despite the surface accretions of different cultures, or the effects of a deprived childhood, or inadequate toilet training, the underlying nature of human beings is the same, be they European, Chinese, Xhosa, or Azande. Factors such as individual circumstances or social conditioning cannot, of course, be ignored, but given similar circumstances, people are basically the same. It is this kind of theory that underpins the Liberal belief that education is the great leveller of prejudice and superstition and that eventually, Truth will out. In this respect so cynics would say the human race has remained a sad disappointment to Liberals. A second consequence of the belief that all races are the same is that given the correct circumstances, democracy and the Civil Society will emerge in any society. It is the duty of Liberals, therefore, to ensure that the correct circumstances do arise, which brings us back to the power of education and certain aspects of 19th century British colonial policy, embodied in Macaulay's "Great Minute" on Indian Education.

Individuals are, in the Liberal sense, complete outwith society. The reasons for holding this are not always the same. In Locke, for example, there is the belief that men come complete in the state of nature and

¹⁷ Compare Locke's attitude to the sanctity of private property and the claim of Aquinas that a starving man could take his neighbour's food and that no crime was done thereby.

and then construct society in order to ~~maximize~~ their desires. There is also the belief in Locke that they have a 'mind' rather like an empty bucket which is filled up by impressions and the like, thus ~~determining~~ the particular individual you or I will be. But, since these impressions are qualitatively the same, bad, or incorrect impressions can, via education, be replaced by the correct ones. If people are the same the world over, the Civil Society that Liberals take to be the most civilised form of government is, in principle, attainable by everyone - with help from Liberal politicians. A similar view, applied to economics, can be found in W W Rostow's "5 stages of economic growth".¹⁸

Given the fact that for Liberals it is the individual who is the fulcrum of political activity, they are against the expropriation of matters of individual concern by the state. Socialism must lead to moral and political degeneration by sapping individual initiative and create nothing but dull conformity; or so Mill argued in 'On Liberty'. Paternalism is also misguided, since it deprives people of the opportunity to develop creative self-determination and, more importantly, moral responsibility. Socialism and paternalism are both misguided in the belief that through state action a concerted attack can be made on the evils of the world, or even the imperfections of a society. The struggle against such imperfections is the responsibility of the individual and the only way to go about altering society is through what Popper terms 'piecemeal social engineering'.¹⁹

¹⁸ W W Rostow, The Process of Economic Growth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

¹⁹ Popper's argument, to be fair, derives from his attack on Marxism and on the analogy drawn by Marxists between Marxism and science. Popper argues that scientific innovation does not consist of 'overthrowing' existing/

Liberals are not then, Utopians. Though the Civil Society is the best form of society, and representative democracy the best form of government, they are not perfect. Popper argues that the advantage of democracy is that governments can be removed from office, and this makes parliamentary democracy merely the least bad form of political institution. Government is not a natural phenomenon, but a rational construct which men have brought into being in order to protect the individual from the licence of unbridled power. The problem of power is solved by the rule of law, whereby everyone is subject to the impartial demands of legal restraint in return for protection. By submitting themselves (à la Locke) to a voluntary association, men are able to go about their lives without fear of coercion by the mighty, abiding by a series of rules that favour no particular section of the community.

It is important for Liberals that government should be balanced and not in the hands of any interested party, even if that party is in the majority. The tyranny of the majority over the individual conscience is as abhorrent as the tyranny of the minority. Mill and Macaulay, though convinced democrats, were careful to stress the dangers of mob rule, and in particular the possibility of the descent into totalitarianism.

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theories, but in making piecemeal extensions ~~to~~ refutations of them. Thus if Marxists do want a political programme based upon science, they will settle for piecemeal change. It is worth noting here that both Liberals such as Popper and Conservatives such as Oakeshott both reject the wholesale removal of the imperfections of society by the state, through a programme. However, the combination of fallibilism and rationalism in Popper's positive programme is very different from the Oakeshottian conception of politics in general: for piecemeal social engineering still comes from the same roots as massive state planning. See his comments on Hayek in the next chapter.

For both Mill and Macaulay, government should be in the hands of the most progressive class of the time. Thus Macaulay wanted to extend the vote to more property owners, but not to everyone, and Mill regarded the middle classes as the most dynamic section of the community, the aristocracy having petrified into reactionaries and the workers not being ready to handle the reins of power responsibly. But even a progressive government should not have too much power concentrated in its hands, and this is why Liberals believe in the separation of the executive, judicial and legislative functions of government; it is the best way of maintaining a balance that cannot lead to either anarchy or totalitarianism.

If Liberals are, in the sense indicated above, pessimists about human nature, they are optimists in their belief in the power of human reason. It is important to note that Man, for Liberals, is a Rational Being, or at least has that potential. We have already noted that Liberals see the Civil Society as something that all nations and races can achieve and furthermore that there has been progress from what Popper terms 'closed' or tribal societies, to 'open' democratic, scientific ones. The weapon with which other forms of social order are defeated is not force, or the mysterious workings of the dialectic, but Reason. Reason is seen in contrast to habit or the authority of a tradition. Bentham for example, regarded custom as the root of political evil; for established relationships are based upon nothing more than sentiment, prejudice, contingency and ancient usurpation. He wrote "when will the yoke of custom - custom, the blind tyrant of which other tyrants make their slave - ah! when will that misery-perpetuating yoke be shaken off? - When will Reason be seated on her Throne?"²⁰ In

²⁰ J Bentham, Plan of Parliamentary Reform (London: Hunter, 1817), cxcviii.

Bentham's case, he actually went as far as suggesting that all traditional and habitual behaviour (and institutions so based) be done away with and replaced by a rational society based upon the stern but just principle of utility.²¹ Bentham felt that without (in his sense) a rational foundation, human relationships must be incoherent and he sought to bring that coherence through a rational legal system, based upon a rational moral code. Not all Liberals have gone to Bentham's almost nihilistic lengths to reform society, but there has still been an emphasis on directing the human will down the path of reason, as opposed to accepting received opinion. Kant's argument for moral autonomy is of this form. He suggests that X cannot be a moral authority for me, since I only ought to do what X says if that which he commands is right. But if I am in a position to say whether X's command is right then I do not need his instruction. In short, to recognise anyone as an authority is to recognise the authority of our own reason. (This ties up once more with the notion of the individual.) Liberals believe something like this to be true and count the tyranny of tradition and of dogma as the principal enemies of reason. For Bentham and to a lesser extent Mill, reason appears as little more than the exercise of a technique. Moreover, as we acquire knowledge through the exercise of reason we become wiser, Bentham held that each generation is wiser than the last, and a similar claim is made in relation to historians by Macaulay. Wisdom appears to be the application of knowledge, guided by the appropriate techniques. In

²¹ Though, of course, he admitted that he could not give this a rational foundation.

this sense, history for example, has a purely practical role for Bentham, it is what we learn politics from. The fact that it did not contain enough practical information was one of the reasons for Bentham's comparative dislike of history.²² Reason in this sense is connected to the logic of choice. It decides, on the basis of experience, the policies best suited to obtaining desired ends without conflicting with other ends. (In the case of Bentham and Mill desires are those things which produce pleasure or happiness.)

Bentham has at least two problems in this equation. Firstly, he must show that pleasures and pains are qualitatively the same and can be 'set off' against each other in equivalent units. Secondly, there is a tension between the two principles he rests the notion of happiness on. For the individual this principle must be one of hedonism, ie what gives me more pleasure than pain, but this cannot be squared with the principle of utility, where I should strive for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, irrespective of my own feelings. Since my own feelings are the only ones I can (logically) know about, it is difficult to see on what information I could possibly base such a calculation.

Two things are worth noting here. Firstly, there is a strong 'rationalist' (in Oakeshott's sense) element in Liberal thought. The technique, based upon reason, for solving political problems can be a substitute for political experience and can guide the novice through the maze of political contingency. Secondly, as has been stated, wisdom is simply the increase of 'hard' knowledge, and the growth of knowledge leads invariably to the abandonment of prejudice and superstition.

²² See A Comment on the Commentaries, ed C W Everett (Oxford, 1928) 136, quoted in Manning, op cit, 27.

Now Bentham's account of reason and technique and his conception of knowledge are seriously misconceived. The desire, in the face of laws or institutions that seem arbitrary or corrupt, to replace them by better laws should not deceive us into thinking that some laws are unreasonable (in the sense of irrational) and others not, for rules cannot be rational or irrational, they determine whether or not actions are legal or not. Like Voltaire, Bentham seems to have thought that the only way to have decent laws was to scrap all existing ones and start again. But what is rational or irrational does not replace a tradition, it is only intelligible within a tradition. If all laws were rewritten they would not be more (or less) rational than the present legal code, and any additions to these new laws would spring from the context of those laws and problems associated with them, that is a tradition of legal thought and not 'reason' pure and simple. That 'reason' cannot roam in an unrestrained fashion over all questions is true even in science. The scientist who isolates a new phenomenon or, like Newton or Einstein, substantially recasts the mould of scientific enquiry, does not make his discoveries in vacuo but builds on, and out of, related discoveries and theories. The worth of these discoveries is not an extra quality attached to the phenomenon disclosed, but is only intelligible when considered in the light of existing theories that are confirmed or require modification on that basis. In short, 'reason' is context bound. This means that certain things constitute the framework of reason in a particular context and cannot be challenged within that context - there are no foundations in Bentham's sense for all enquiry to rest upon if it is to be rational. And, what is reasonable differs from context to context. Reasonable belief in an experiment and reasonable belief in a

friend's sincerity may not be amenable to the same kind of enquiry. Secondly, it is surely mistaken to equate one kind of knowledge with knowledge tout court. This is a point made powerfully by Michael Oakeshott in his essay 'Rationalism in Politics'.²³ It may be true that some knowledge can be reduced to a matter of technique and written down in books to guide or inform the apprentice or learner in a particular art or craft. But there is more than this to many activities, including politics. The ~~sart~~ sart of judgement that allows the experienced chess player to look at the board and say "I like the feel of white's position" or the judgement with which the experienced politician decides whether he can sack X without splitting the party cannot be learnt like the multiplication tables. Such knowledge, 'practical knowledge' as opposed to 'technical knowledge' in Oakeshott's terminology, is no less real than the latter. Furthermore, the ability to expound in writing the technical aspects of, say, golf, does not mean that one is a successful practitioner of the game. The best coaches are rarely the most successful tournament players. Technique may be important, but it comes to very little if it is not blended with experience, if only for the reason that without experience we would never be in the position to recognise a situation in which technique X was required. To say "Always drive an overpitched delivery" depends on the (non-technical) ability to recognise a full toss. In a similar way, Machiavelli's injunction to be ruthless to riots and civil disturbances depends on the ruler's ability to judge between a riot and mere high spirits. And it is worth remarking

²³ See M J Oakeshott, *op cit*, 1 - 36.

that the greatest practitioners of a sport or politics are those who can recognise the occasions when such maxims should be broken.

Thirdly, the accumulation of facts may leave us none the wiser, as opposed to being in possession of more information. It is by no means clear that Bentham was wiser than Socrates. As Rush Rhees points out²⁴ a modern science undergraduate probably knows more physics than Newton ever did, but that neither makes him a wiser or better scientist than Newton was. Even if we were to waive the earlier difficulties involved in talking about the 'growth of knowledge' (as if knowledge were a single mass that was constantly having new bits added to it) there can be no move from technological progress to progress in the sense understood by Liberals - that is to say a more civilised society. There is no reason to believe that increased technical mastery of the environment must (as opposed to could) lead to a more civilised and humane society.- ask a Jew in Nazi Germany or a modern day Palestinian. As Chesterton's Father Brown once remarked, the trouble with infallible machines is that they are operated by the most fallible of creatures - man.

So far I have made some schematic remarks about Liberalism in general, drawing our attention to some of its more important and characteristic ideas. These ideas, though presented in opposition to other ideologies such as Marxism are not so very different in form, despite differences in content. For example, there is a strong element of rationalism in both Marxist and Liberal thought. Marx and Engels both believed in the power of 'reason' to sweep away the dross of bygone ages. It is probably an

²⁴ Rush Rhees, Without Answers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969)

ideological distortion that Marx makes in his XIth thesis on Feuerbach²⁵ for Bentham was as concerned as any to change society and make it conform to his copious plans for transformation and improvement. It is also true that Popper's 'Social Engineering' may be seen as the other side of the coin to the technological conception of politics that he criticises in Marx. And, seen from one point of view, Popper's belief in 'Progress' and the movement from the 'closed' to the 'open' society is as historicist as the Marxist view it attacks.

II

In the rest of this chapter I want to turn to look at two particular contributors to the Liberal tradition who were both historians. In their works we shall see (I hope) some of the characteristic themes of Liberalism that have been noted above. The two men are Thomas Babbington Macaulay and Lord Acton. It should be stressed that these men are not being presented as archetypes of Liberalism, but as examples of it. As such, it is an irrelevant objection to say that they are both from the 19th century and cannot, therefore, be typical of modern Liberalism. Even if there were typical Liberals who wrote history today, this would not lessen the importance of Acton and Macaulay as examples. In the chapter on Marxism a distinction was elaborated between Marxist historians and Marxist history. To follow this theme through, I should claim that Acton and Macaulay both believed in Liberal history. An example of a Liberal historian (that is an historian who happens to be a Liberal in politics) would be Alan Bullock, and I will be drawing attention to some of the points made in his own major work 'Hitler: a study in tyranny',²⁶ where appropriate.

²⁵ Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol I, 15

²⁶ Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1952

Both Macaulay and Acton were actively involved in politics of one type or another. In Macaulay's case he sat as an MP till he lost his Edinburgh seat in the election of 1847 and retired from public life to write his 'History of England'. A fairly typical example of his political beliefs can be found in a speech made in Edinburgh during the election campaign of 1839.

I entered public life a Whig; and a Whig I am determined to remain ... I mean by a Whig, not one who subscribes implicitly to the contents of any book, though that book may have been written by Locke; not one who approves the whole conduct of any statesman, though that statesman may have been Fox; not one who adopts the opinions in fashion in any circle, though that circle may be composed of the finest and noblest spirits of the age. I can discern ... a party ... that has the glory of having established our civil and religious liberties on a firm foundation ...²⁷

After listing the various struggles of the Whigs against the monarchy to ensure civil liberties for all, he concludes

To the Whigs of the 17th century, we owe it that we have a House of Commons. To the Whigs of the 19th century we owe it that the House of Commons has been purified. The abolition of the slave trade, the abolition of Colonial slavery, the extension of popular education, the mitigation of the rigour of the penal code, all, all were affected by that party; and of that party, I repeat, I am a member ...²⁸

Whigs have, so Macaulay argues, fought for progress against reaction, and have brought forth civilisation out of barbarism. Equally importantly, Whigs are characterised by their belief in Reason as against authority, and progress has been established because it is reasonable, rather than inevitable. Macaulay's parliamentary speeches are further examples of an important strain in 19th century Liberalism. He did have his differences of opinion with other Liberals, for example Bentham

²⁷ T.B. Macaulay, Speeches (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, 1854), pp 182-183

²⁸ Ibid, pp 183-184

and James Mill. Even when Macaulay spoke of the end of government as being the happiness of the people, it is doubtful that he meant it in any utilitarian sense. Like J.S. Mill, Macaulay was a believer in the concept of a balanced government and in the dynamism of the middle classes. For example, one of his speeches in favour of the 1832 Reform Act contains the argument that in order to continue the progress of British society, the property owning middle classes must be enfranchised. Moreover, frustrating the Bill would have the effect of alienating a section of society and driving them into the hands of those who wished to ferment anarchy and revolution. The thought of revolutionary upheaval was repellent to Macaulay, and as we shall see later on, one of the points that he stresses in his historical writings is the smooth and imperceptible way that the British have undergone constitutional change. But if brute reaction would lead to revolution, so too would the indiscriminate widening of the franchise to the labouring classes. Like J.S. Mill, Macaulay feared the ~~un~~uneducated masses.

If the labourers of England were in that state which I, from my soul, wish to see them ... the principal objections to universal sufferage would be removed.³⁰

For, as Macaulay points out, the existence of universal sufferage in the United States has not lead to revolution. The difference with England is that the labouring classes here were often in such a state of acute distress that they were any easy prey for demagogues.

We know that it (distress) makes even wise men irritable, unreasonable, credulous, eager for immediate relief, heedless of remote consequences ... It is therefore no reflection on the poorer classes of Englishmen, who are not, and who cannot in the nature of things be, highly educated, to say that

³⁰ Speech of 2 March 1831 reprinted in Macaulay: Prose and Poetry, ed G.M. Young, (London: Rupert-Hart Davies, 1952), pp664-665

distress ... blinds their judgement, inflames their passion, that it makes them prone to believe those who flatter them, and to distrust those who would serve them.³¹

Enfranchising the mass of the voters before they were educated enough to be responsible voters would lead to both conformity, based upon the will of the majority and intolerance of minority views. As we have already noted, tolerance is an important aspect of the Liberal society and it is not a accident that Macaulay's historical writings are full of the contrast between the toleration (particularly of religious dissent) shown in England and the oppression of minorities on the continent. An example of how far Macaulay was prepared to go in the name of tolerance is over his support for the bill to give money towards the upkeep of a Roman Catholic seminary - Maynooth College - in Ireland. Even though Macaulay argued that the Roman Catholic Church was itself one of the greatest threats to tolerance and liberty, he was sufficient of a pluralist to argue that, providing they were within the law of the land, and providing that they accepted the civil authority of the state, there was no harm in religious disagreement. To those who suggested that Catholicism was an error, and that money should not be given to the propagation of errors, he responded that if that were so then the Church of England would need to be suppressed, since it contained tendencies that were exclusive of each other. Thus, at least part of the Established Church must be in error, even if we do not know which part. Macaulay lies firmly within the tradition of Locke and Voltaire on this point. It is, however, curious to note that this toleration did not extend to all (just as Milton's tolerance did not extend to Roman Catholics). The Hindus in India had practices (notably those of Suttee and Thuggee) that Macaulay did not approve of and would not

³¹Ibid, p665

tolerate. The reason for this was their social effect rather than their theological basis, and because they infringed the rights of others. This view has echos in the modern dictum "I will tolerate anything except intolerance". We may assume that had the Roman Catholic Church been as powerful in England as Hinduism in India, then Macaulay might have been a good deal less tolerant.

The Maynooth case is interesting because one of Macaulay's arguments is based upon a form of relativism - we cannot be certain of the truth in some situations and must, therefore, allow diversity. This view is in contrast to his opinions elsewhere; for example, he was quite certain that it was both possible and desirable to judge between the relative degree of civilization in two or more societies. This is clearly shown in his 'Great Minute' on Indian education of February 1835. As President of the Committee of Public Instruction, Macaulay was confronted by two factions, the Orientalists - who wished to preserve Sanskrit and the ancient learning of India - and the Europeans - who wished to bring Western education to India. Macaulay favoured the latter group, for the overwhelming superiority of Western culture in science and history over that of the Orient was plainly manifest.

I have never found one among them (the Orientalists) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of Asia and India.

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England.³²

On the other hand

It (English) stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of

³²Op.cit., p722

imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions, which, considered merely as narratives have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations.³³

Macaulay plainly thought, as Sir James Frazer was to do, that all reason is to be found in a single mode of thought - Western thought - and that all other cultures must be judged by that standard. It never occurred to him that the Hindu belief that the world is held up by a man on the back of an elephant and so on need not be a rival theory to that of Newton. For Macaulay the matter was simply one of instruction, so that Indians can become as proficient as Europeans at science and history. The problem was one of numbers and resources, hence his famous idea that the British should "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."³⁴ In fact the British chose to create this intermediate class or caste by intermarriage rather than by education; they became the Anglo-Indians a class who were, in fact, rejected by both communities. Bearing in mind some of the general points that have emerged from Macaulay's political speeches and his activities in government let us now turn to consider his historical writings in more detail. Right at the

³³ Ibid, pp722-723

³⁴ Ibid, p729

outset of his 'History of England', Macaulay tells us that his task is to relate how under the settlement of 1688

the authority of law and the security of property were found to be compatible with a liberty of discussion and of individual action never before known; how, from the auspicious union of order and freedom, sprang a prosperity of which the annals of human affairs had furnished no example; how our country rose from a state of ignominious vassalage, rapidly rose to the place of umpire among European powers; how her opulence and her martial glory grew together; how, by wise, resolute good faith, was gradually established a public credit fruitful of marvels to which the statesmen of any former age would have seemed incredible ...³⁵

Yet, unless I greatly deceive myself, the general effect of this chequered narrative will be to excite thankfulness in all religious minds, and hope in the breasts of all patriots. For the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement. Those who compare the age in which their lot has fallen with a golden age that exists only in their imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay: but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or despondent view of the present.³⁶

This progress is, as we have already noted, due largely to the efforts of the Whig party (and those who anticipated Whig policies) against the machinations of the Tories and the Roman Catholic Church.

Macaulay's main thrust in his 'History' is twofold. Firstly, he extols the virtues of gradual development, as opposed to "demolition and reconstruction"³⁷. This is related to his argument that the constitution under which his generation live, is the same constitution as that which existed 500 years ago "as the tree is to the sapling".³⁸ Curiously, Macaulay holds this link to be something of a drawback; for it means that

³⁵ T.B. Macaulay, A History of England (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1889), Vol I, I

³⁶ Ibid, 2

³⁷ Ibid, 13

³⁸ Ibid, 13

precedents for party political points can be sought in the past and that gives the study of history a partisan, not to say party, flavour. Thus the statesmen are under the spell of the past and the historians under the spell of the present.³⁹ Macaulay clearly disapproves of such partisanship, for it has prevented both sides seeing anything other than what they want to see. Yet, on the other hand, he is quite certain that the past is related to the present in the sense that our present liberties have their seeds in the ages gone by. Our liberties emerge, rather like trees in a fog, from the mists of time.

Sterile and obscure as is that portion of our annals, it is there that we must seek for the origin of our freedom, our prosperity, and our glory ... Then first appeared with distinctiveness that constitution that has ever since, through all changes, preserved its identity; that constitution of which all other free constitutions in the world are copies, and which, in spite of some defects, deserves to be regarded as the best under which any great society has ever yet existed during many ages.⁴⁰

The strength of the constitution is, for Macaulay, shown in the way in which the revolution of 1688 can be grounded in the ancient rights of the feudal age. This revolution was both the least violent and most beneficial of revolutions

To us who live in the year 1848, it may seem almost an abuse of terms to call such a proceeding, conducted with so much deliberation, with so much sobriety, and with such minute attention to prescriptive etiquette, by the terrible name of revolution.⁴¹

It was, furthermore, the last English revolution. This point is of some importance, for Macaulay was writing in 1848, a time at which many of the thrones of Europe were in the throes of violent civil unrest.

³⁹ Ibid, pp13-14

⁴⁰ Ibid, p17

⁴¹ Ibid, p654

His appeal to the English is clearly one of avoiding a destructive revolution by holding to the principles of a preserving revolution - that of 1688.

The second thrust of Macaulay's work is the belief that history shows that states run by democracies have been more 'brilliantly prosperous' than those that have been governed by autocratic monarchs or churches. He shared with J.S. Mill (as in 'Considerations on Representative Government') the view that democracy has civilised man. For example, Macaulay compares life under the despotism of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe with that of England under a Protestant Parliament.

But during the last three centuries, to stund the growth of the human mind has been (the Roman Catholic Church's) chief object. Throughout Christendom, whatever advance has been made in knowledge, in freedom, in wealth, and in the arts of life, has been made in spite of her, and has everywhere been in inverse proportion to her power. The lowliest and most fertile provinces of Europe have, under her rule, been sunk in poverty, in political servitude, and in intellectual torpor, while Protestant countries, once proverbial for sterility and barbarism, have been turned by skill and by industry into gardens ... The descent of Spain, once the first among monarchies, to the lowest depths of degradation, the elevation of Holland, in spite of many natural disadvantages, to a position such as no commonwealth so small has ever reached, teach the same lesson. Whoever passes ... from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant country, finds he has passed from a lower to a higher grade of wiviliastion.⁴²

And it would be possible to quote chapter and verse from 'A History of England' where Macaulay makes precisely this kind of point about Protestantism. Even though this general improvement has had some drawbacks, such as an increase in poverty amongst the poorest and agricultural classes (cf the debate about the Industrial Revolution in the previous chapter), its positiv~~e~~ side is, for Macaulay, unassailable. There are fewer deaths, less disease, less brutality

⁴² Ibid, p48

and above all, more liberty and freedom. The path is, in general, always an upward one for Macaulay, always forward to progress. Witness the scorn he pours upon the idea of a golden age, and the idea of returning to it.

In truth we are under a deception similar to that which misleads the traveller in the Arabian desert. Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare: but far in advance, add far in the rear, is the semblance of refreshing waters. The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand ... They ~~warn~~ their eyes and see a lake where an hour before, they were toiling through sand. A similar illusion haunts nations through the long ~~gpp~~ progress from poverty and barbarism to the highest degree of opulence and civilisation. But if we resolutely chase the mirage backward, we shall find it recede before us into fabulous antiquity.⁴³

As we shall see in our discussion of Macaulay later on, one of the ironies of the situation is that he is guilty of a similar fault himself. But before looking more critically at Macaulay's conception of the past, let us turn to Lord Acton.

Having noted the vehemence with which Macaulay condemned the Catholic Church as an enemy of progress it is, perhaps surprising to find that Acton was both a Liberal and a Roman Catholic. Macaulay conceded that in some circumstances the authority of the Catholic Church had been preferable to the anarchy and pure despotism that had preceded it. Even so, the Church was an inimicable enemy of progress. Acton on the other hand, believed that the Roman Church had played an important part in the growth of liberty, rather than in suppressing it. In 'Political Thoughts on the Church' he wrote

The Christian notion of conscience imperatively demands a corresponding measure of personal liberty ... The Church cannot tolerate any species of government in which this is not recognised. She is the irreconcilable

⁴³ Ibid, p426-427

enemy of the despotism of the state ... The Church has succeeded in producing the kind of liberty she exacts for her children only in those states that she herself has created or transformed. Real freedom has been known in no state in history that did not pass through her mediaeval action. The history of the Middle Ages is the history of the gradual emancipation of men from every species of servitude, in proportion as the influence of religion became more universal.⁴⁴

Acton was, of course, careful not to equate the power of the Church that brought liberty out of pagan despotism with any Catholic State. Indeed, he was quite prepared to accept that a Catholic State might not have what he termed a Catholic government, or that a Protestant State might have such a government.⁴⁵ For Acton, any kind of despotism, be it that of Louis XIV or of Pope Pius IX, was anathema. The most Catholic of States could have the most un-Catholic of governments. Indeed, the whole story of Acton's opposition to Ultramontaniam and his opposition to the view of the Papacy enshrined in the Syllabus of Errors, the first Vatican Council and the definition of Papal Infallibility shows both that he held liberty to be the highest of virtues and that he was not afraid to denounce his co-religionists for failing to uphold it.⁴⁶

Liberty, so Acton held, was "not a means to a higher political end. It is the highest political end."⁴⁷ This view distinguishes him from other Liberals such as J.S. Mill who held that liberty was but an end to happiness. And what did this liberty consist of for Acton?

By liberty I mean the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion.⁴⁸

It needs, therefore, to be protected against both the interference of the state and arbitrary power. The rule of law over monarchs and Popes

⁴⁴ History of Freedom, Ed. Figgis and Laurence (London: Macmillan, 1907), p 203

⁴⁵ Ibid, p210

⁴⁶ See the account in H. MacDougall, The Acton-Newman Relations (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962)

⁴⁷ Ibid, p22

⁴⁸ Ibid, p3 See also Lectures on Modern History (London: Macmillan, 1906), pl3

alike secures this balance of liberty, for as his famous aphorism on power shows, Acton was not always an optimist about unfettered human nature.

The other important aspect of Acton's view on liberty was its link with the idea of progress, the zeitgeist of the nineteenth century. "My theory", he once noted, "is that Divine government is not justified without progress. There is no *raison d'être* for the world".⁴⁹ The activity of a provident God meant, for Acton, that there was progress. Looking at the past, Acton concluded that its movement was towards liberty, and liberty meant "that condition in which men are not prevented by men from obeying their duty to God."⁵⁰ In a letter to Dollinger he wrote:

there is a grand unity in the history of ideas - of conscience, of morality, and of the means of securing it. I venture to say that the secret of the philosophy of history lies there:- it is the only point of view from which one discovers a constant progress, the only one therefore that justifies the ways of God to man.⁵¹

As we shall see shortly, Acton believed that history confirmed this view.

If progress and the law of history brought man closer to "the Kingdom of God that is Liberty"⁵² then attempts to ensure equality were attempts to set back that great design. Like J.S. Mill and Macaulay, Acton feared the extension of democracy to the masses and wanted to avoid the 'tyranny of the majority' by a form of proportional representation that would ensure that no section of society could gain an absolute majority. As he put it in a passage examining the failure (for Acton) of the French Revolution, "the passion for equality made vain the hope

⁴⁹ Quoted in MacDougall, op cit, pl68

⁵⁰ Ibid, pl69

⁵¹ Acton to Dollinger, 22 September 1882

⁵² MacDougall, op cit, pl73

of freedom."⁵³

Like Macaulay, Acton saw history as being much more than an account of how men had acted in the past. History can be said to achieve three things: it is the true demonstration of religion; it shows the progress of liberty from antiquity to the present, such that men in the present can see that they have more of it than those in the past; it is of practical relevance in political matters. In general terms Acton makes the point in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge. He quotes with approval the remark of his predecessor, Sir John Seeley, "Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics", before continuing

Everybody perceives the sense in which this is true. For the science of politics is the one science that is deposited by the stream of history, like grains of gold in the sands of a river; and the knowledge of the past, the record of truth revealed by experience, is eminently practical, as an instrument of action and a power that goes into making the future.⁵⁴

It is not surprising then, to find Acton arguing that "The great question is to discover, not what governments prescribe, but what they ought to prescribe."⁵⁵

Two works that might usefully be considered here are 'A History of Freedom' and the 'Lectures on the French Revolution'. The latter work, perhaps not surprisingly given the proximity of the events to Acton's own time, treats the revolution as a contemporary event. The whole way of speaking, even about contemporary events, strikes us today as foreign or at least the kind of writing that ought to be confined to works of polemics. It is an odd mixture of narrative, of analysis

⁵³ Lectures on Modern History, p57

⁵⁴ Lectures on Modern History, pp1-2

⁵⁵ The History of Freedom, p24

and of stern judgement in which the ideal of liberty is never far away, and certainly always in mind when events are being assessed for their importance or their worth. Thus,

This was the miserable end of the Girondin party. They were easily beaten and mercilessly destroyed, and no man stirred to save them. At their fall liberty perished; but it had become a feeble remnant in their hands, and a spark almost extinguished. Although they were not only weak but bad, no nation has ever suffered a greater misfortune than that which befell France in their defeat and destruction.⁵⁶

And again concerning Robespierre

Only this is certain, that he remains the most hateful character in the forefront of history since Machiavelli reduced to a code the wickedness of public men.⁵⁷

What strikes one as odd here is precisely the need to offer this kind of judgement, as if the mere telling of the story did not make things clear in itself. An interesting comparison is with Bullock's study of Hitler, where, though the events are scarcely less contemporary (it was written in 1952) the evil of Hitler's Germany comes through the story and not as an additional layer to it. In fact Bullock explicitly refuses to see his work as having 'an axe to grind' or to be either for or against Hitler: the nearest thing we get to an Actonian judgement in 800 pages is a brief remark on the Communist and Nazi parties as organised conspiracies.⁵⁸

The 'History of Freedom' is interesting in that the title implies a certain unity that might, perhaps, be disputed. Freedom is something that can be judged by one set of standards and we can assess how it has grown or diminished in past societies, much in the same way that we might talk about contemporary South Africa or the USSR. Acton's

⁵⁶Op cit, p268

⁵⁷Op cit, p300

⁵⁸Op cit, p176

thesis in 'History of Freedom' is that we have more of it than previous societies. True freedom consists in obeying God and the societies of classical antiquity were lacking proper freedom in three respects. Firstly they lacked a representative government, secondly they denied emancipation to slaves and thirdly they denied freedom of conscience.⁵⁹ It is important to note that Acton believes that the societies of antiquity knew as well as the 19th century Liberal what the rights of man were, they merely failed to put them into effect.⁶⁰ As he put it, "Although the doctrine of self-reliance and self-denial, which is the foundation of political economy, was written as legibly in the New Testament as in the Wealth of Nations, it was not recognised until our age."⁶¹

Under Christianity progress towards freedom achieved heights that were impossible for the states of antiquity. Again, Acton is always looking for authors who 'anticipated' modern trends such as Marsilius of Padua, who "had so firm a grasp of the principles that were to sway the modern world".⁶² The middle ages had moved towards attaining the knowledge of political truth in that representative government was almost universal, slavery had been virtually abolished and the principle of Habeus Corpus had been established.⁶³ According to Acton the great questions of principle had been solved, what remained was the working out of these principles in practice. And so on.⁶⁴

It is clear from the above that Acton holds to a standard of judgement (Roughly co-incidental with the 'higher law' of God) by which each and every society should be judged. To accept relativism in history can only lead to scepticism, and thus to judge people merely by the standards of

⁵⁹ Op cit, p25

⁶⁰ Op cit, p27

⁶¹ Op cit, p28

⁶² Op cit, p37

⁶³ Op cit, p39

⁶⁴ Given Macaulay's views on liberty and Catholicism it is interesting to note his view that intolerance is only accidental in Catholicism.

their own time is to adopt no proper standard at all. Acton recognised that this was a minority view.

But the weight of opinion is against me when I exhort you never to debase the moral currency ..., but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty that history has the power to inflict on wrong ... The men who plot to baffle and resist us ... set up the principle that only a foolish conservative judges the present time with the ideas of the past; that only a foolish liberal judges the past with the ideas of the present.

... There is a popular saying of Madame de Stael, that we forgive whatever we really understand. The paradox has been judiciously pruned by her descendent the Duc de Broglie, in the words "Beware too much explaining, lest we end by too much excusing" ... Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity ... if we lower our standard in History, we cannot uphold it in Church or in State.⁶⁵

It should be noted here that Acton is not necessarily arguing that the present has the correct standards, merely that the same standards should apply to both past and present.

The view of history offered by Macaulay and Acton has many points of interest, despite the fact that it seems, perhaps, to us a rather odd enterprise - the product of a different cast of mind. The desire to establish so forcefully those moral standards and judgements on which the past can be judged is, at least, less stylistically flamboyant in the works of contemporary historians. In this sense their approach to history (or rather the past) is thoroughly ideological, drawing on the rhetorical tradition of Burke and Paine. In a way they can be compared to E.P. Thompson, where a similar use of the past as a repository of moral examples is made. This is a point that has been touched upon earlier - in short it is an example of the view that we recall the past

⁶⁴/but endemic in Protestantism.

⁶⁵Lectures on Modern History, p24ff

as history, rather than as a species of practical wisdom. But as has already been argued, the view that history can be of any practical use depends upon the assumption that people in the past have recorded the future. The historical use of the past can make no such assumption, it can neither tell us how things will be, nor ought to be. Neither can it tell us how to achieve our objectives, since it is precisely those differences between 1789 and 1917 that make a study of the French Revolution such a poor guide to overthrowing Tzarist Russia. Only ignorance protects those who search the past to solve the problems of the present.

Again, as we have seen, it is only our non-historical and non-technical judgement that allows us to relate, say, the ~~storming~~ of the Winter Palace with any plans we might have for an attack on Stormont. But by lifting such a plan out of history and into practice we change its character (bringing it into a different logical area). The attempt of the French to fight the war of 1914-18 in 1939-40 is a good example of the real use of 'history' as a guide.

Leaving this general point aside, what can be said of Action and Macaulay here? On one level a whole range of criticisms might be made about the actual accuracy and reliability of their views. That would, of course, be the province of the historian, and not of this thesis. Related to this, however, is the question of - I suppose - emphasis. By that I mean the way in which facts are selected and presented. In Macaulay's case this is certainly an important rhetorical device in building up our sympathy towards William III and our dislike of James II. One topic that illustrates what I have in mind here is Macaulay's description of their respective mistresses, Elizabeth Villiers and Catherine Sedley. Of Sedley and James we find Macaulay writing:

A dramatist would scarcely venture to bring onto the stage a grave prince, in the decline of life, ready to sacrifice his crown in order to serve the ends of his religion, indefatigable in making preselytes, and yet deserting and insulting a virtuous wife who had youth and beauty for the sake of a profligate paramour who had neither.⁶⁶

And the preceding pages give little hint of sympathy for the weak king and his ugly, scheming mistress. But of Villiers and William we find

He was, indeed, drawn away from his wife by other women, in particular one of her ladies (EV) who, though destitute of personal attractions, and disfigured by a hideous squint, possessed talents that well fitted her to partake his cares. He was indeed ashamed of his errors, and spared no pains to conceal them ...⁶⁷

The general impression of the pages which deal with this episode is one of Queen Mary's virtues bringing back the basically good king to his senses. Major defects in the character of James become minor peccadillos when applied to William. Much more might be said about this, though there would be relatively little to gain, since this is a criticism of Macaulay that is widely accepted. (See for example, Butterfield.)⁶⁸

A more interesting area of discussion is to look at the various claims that it is indeed the civil society that has given us progress, and that the study of the past demonstrates this. One aspect of this is raised by Acton; for he had to admit that even within a Civil Society there were examples of injustice and oppression, resulting in consequent misery. This did not, of course, stop him talking about 'liberty' emerging or the influences that brought 'arbitrary' government under control. It did, however, enable him to sidestep an uncomfortable consequence of his position, namely that liberty cannot be guaranteed by constitutional change

⁶⁶Op cit, Vol I, p364

⁶⁷Op cit, Vol I, p413

⁶⁸H. Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1931)

since it can always be abused by those in power. To this extent his exemplifies an argument that is quite common within Liberal thought. It is the movement from the valid conclusion that arbitrary government is the enemy of good government, to the invalid one that arbitrary government is a form of government itself.⁶⁹ In particular, it is a form associated with monarchies. But neither Acton, nor Macaulay brings forward an argument to show that their understanding of liberty is the only logically coherent one. They simply assume that their readers will believe in the same things that they do. But as long as people who have the same rights under the law are treated in the same way, it is difficult to see the sense in which a government can be arbitrary, as opposed to being morally repugnant. As David Manning points out, the difference between feudal and Civil Society is not that one is more free or ~~just~~ than the other, but that in a Feudal society the different social strata had different rights and in a Civil Society they have the same rights. Whatever our preferences might be, there is nothing incoherent or arbitrary about the Feudal use of the term rights, and the Liberal account, as enshrined in the Civil Society is not an exhaustive account either.

It is this adoption of a single standard of liberty that enables Acton and Macaulay to talk about liberties emerging in 12th century or being rooted in Magna Carta. But it is here that Macaulay in particular is the victim of a mirage himself. For once we go back and place Magna Carta within its context as a feudal document in a feudal society, it soon becomes apparent that it is not the precursor of the Victorian House of Commons in any sense other than that it is historically prior to it. Macaulay seems to be a victim of the fallacy that if there

⁶⁹ Manning, Liberalism, pp125-129

are similarities between two eras, there must be connections, or if there are connections there must be similarities. It may be true that certain legal relationships which were defined in the 12th or 16th centuries are still valid today, but it does not follow from this that 'liberty' can be traced to them. Indeed, if liberty is only the particular set of freedoms that pertain in a particular set up, then the sense in which we can talk about liberty outside of any particular context is limited. To repeat, different societies with legal structures have different liberties, and Liberals do not have a monopoly of the correct use of this term.

But can we not argue with Acton that we have progressed to being a more open and critical society? The arguments about progress offered by Acton and Macaulay suffer from at least two serious defects. Firstly, they run together the very different notions of technical and moral progress. Macaulay lists the advances in science that have reduced deaths from disease alongside 'advances' in the criminal code. But in the latter case we can only make such a judgement by begging the question and giving a privileged metaphysical status to the moral opinions of Macaulay and those who agree with him. But it is surely clear that technical and moral progress are not the same thing, and that advances in the former need to lead to advances in the latter. The problem is that the settled criteria which exist for deciding changes in the mortality rate are themselves the matter of dispute in moral matters. Thus the Conservative can quite legitimately argue that the technological advance in contraception has led to a moral decline and the radical can equally argue that the invention of the atomic bomb (through technology) has merely increased mankind's capacity for evil. In short, what appears as progressive to the Liberal can be seen as decay by others.

The second defect is that neither Acton nor Macaulay can show through a study of the past that what they term progress is caused by a society adopting Liberal values. The temporal conjunction of the things they admired and representative government cannot be sufficient to establish their case. As David Manning puts it, we could not distinguish between the view that democracy has civilised man or that civilised man has democratised government. Indeed, as Macaulay noted, there were plausible counter examples to his argument in the high level of cultural attainment in the despotic Renaissance states or the fact that France was both Catholic and prosperous.

In this sense they have made an error analogous to that made by certain illiberal racialists who argue about the relative defects of other racial types when compared to Aryans. The argument effectively freezes history at the present when it might be plausible to argue that western methods and techniques are evidence of superiority over other races. But once we step back from this we can see that an identical argument would have been available to a Roman in 55BC who might have concluded that the British would never amount to very much. The future, as we can see, would have proved our Roman to be wrong and by the same token the future might prove our racialist wrong since we cannot foretell how well China or Nigeria will be doing in 1,000 years time. In much the same way, Acton and Macaulay start from where they are and spin the argument to justify and explain current standards. They miss the fact that a further 100 years sees Britain in a very different position a propos its European neighbours. Though the argument is no logically sounder in the 19th century, it looks more plausible precisely because of the contingent relationship between success and civil society that I have been describing. A different period such as our own makes it look

less plausible, ~~even~~ if the logic has not improved.

General conclusions about Liberalism as a whole are, perhaps, unwise.

In this chapter I have claimed that not all Liberals base their political beliefs on the ~~same~~ foundations; Locke appealed to philosophy, Acton to religion and the past, and J.S. Mill to both philosophy and history. In as much as they have, like Acton and Macaulay, turned to the evidence of history to support their beliefs, they have supposed that history has shown that the things valued by Liberals, tolerance, reason, balanced government and representative democracy have all led to an improvement in society. And, of course that these things have been brought about by Liberals. The Liberal attitude to history is not an integral part of a theory, in the way in which 'Historical Materialism' is for Marxism, but can, when employed by Liberals, serve as a further illustration of the truth of Liberalism. Not all Liberals turn to history, but doing so, could not fail to produce a favourable analysis. In those cases where they have turned to history - in this chapter, Acton and Macaulay - they have not derived their Liberalism from history (in the logical, as opposed to psychological sense) but have allowed the wider framework of Liberalism, in particular its emphasis on the kind of 'human nature' men, as rational agents, really have, to impose itself on the past. Like Marxists, they have taken out of history only what they themselves have put in. Civil Society is bound to be superior to Feudal or Communist societies, simply because it contains more of the things that Liberals admire. But as we have seen, it cannot be shown that people are either happier in that kind of society, or that they are more justly treated (since injustice is possible in any society, justice cannot be a quality of a particular society)

or that these societies have produced progress in the relevant sense. In short, Acton and Macaulay 'try' the past by the standards of 19th century Liberalism and find it wanting, save for the few souls who anticipated Liberal arguments, it does not seem to have occurred to them that in doing so they were expressing what was important to them and not revealing what was significant about those actions in the past.

CHAPTER FIVE

Marxism is uncompromisingly theoretical in its outlook: the correct theory of political action not only needs to inform political action, but also needs to be wedded to it through revolutionary praxis, if bourgeois ideology is to be overcome, and the real basis of society laid bare. Liberalism, especially in its 'rationalist' incarnation, has the same virtues and faults. Society, it holds, can be run along rational lines for the benefit of all, if only men would put the call of 'reason' above the call of self-interest and prejudice - much as the followers of Professor Hare might decide on both the most efficient one way traffic system in Oxford and the best set of moral values. Conservatism, on the other hand, claims to be free of such plans and dogmas. It is, in the words of Lord Hailsham (written when he was Lord Hailsham the first time around) "an attitude, not a philosophy".¹ The Conservative, writes Oakeshott "(is) disposed to think and behave in certain manners; it is to prefer certain kinds of conduct to others", it is "not a creed or a doctrine, but a disposition".² This disposition, suggests Oakeshott, shows itself in preferring the familiar to the unknown and in preferring changes that are small and slow to those that are large and sudden. It is a disposition that reveals itself in many activities such as fishing or in a situation where we prefer to work with familiar tools rather than the latest technological innovations. It is especially appropriate in friendship, where old relationships are valued for themselves and not for an 'end'. In terms of political activity, government need not be based upon any general theory of society or human

¹ Q Hogg, The Case for Conservatism (Penguin, 1959), 16.

² Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics, 168.

nature, but on the simple preference for the known over the unknown and in the belief that since change entails certain loss and only possible gain, it is up to the innovators to demonstrate that the former is outweighed by the latter.

It may be worth making an initial distinction here between conservatism as an attitude (as indicated above in the references to fishing, friendship and so on) and Conservatism as in ideology. In one sense most of us are probably conservatives in an unreflective way. We prefer favourite records, or favourite clothes and are comfortable in an environment that we know well. But there is another, quite different sense in which Conservatism is a reflective, self-conscious tradition of thought intended, in Lord Hailsham's words "to protect, revive and apply all that is best in the old".³ And it is with that which we are concerned here. From the time of the French Revolution at least, there has been a self-conscious tradition of Conservative thought in Britain and Europe which is committed to political activity as a way of preserving freedoms and particular ways of life against the ravages of rampant individualism or the totalitarianism of the masses. It may well be the case, as Lord Hugh Cecil argues,⁴ that up to the eighteenth century men were by inclination conservative and that there was no need to state conservative principles since there was nothing to oppose them to, but it is certainly not the case since then. Widespread social change since then has brought about the need for the explicit stating of a principle. Again, though there may be no explicit formulation of political ideas such as one finds in the works of Marxists or Liberals, it is still the case that Conservatism is an ideology is

³ Op. cit, 18.

⁴ Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism (Home University Library, 1912).

underpinned by a view of human nature, the abandonment of which has led revolutionaries to spectacular disaster. If Conservatives are wise enough to hold that politics is not the most important of human activities, they are foolish enough to engage in that arena as vigorously as their opponents.

Of course a chapter such as this could not hope to cover and do justice to every variety of Conservative thought. The pessimism with which Conservatives have viewed great plans for the improvement of mankind has not led them to substantial agreement on the way society ought to be organised, and their political programmes have sprung from a number of separate roots. Conservatism in the USA is a rather different beast from the Conservatism of Hegel or Oakeshott. I shall, therefore, be somewhat selective, and confine my remarks to British Conservatism. That area of Conservative thought that Henry Drucker labels as 'continental bureaucratic Conservatism'⁵ (as opposed to 'Anglo-Saxon sceptical Conservatism')) and intended to cover such thinkers as Hegel, Comte and de Tocqueville is, therefore, set aside. This is not to say that it did not influence British Conservatives, for example, Carlyle and Coleridge.

The lack of a structured theoretical comprehensiveness in British Conservative thought, its lack of a Hegel perhaps, is more than compensated for by the success of its pragmatism in the political arena. British Conservatism, whether by "dishing the Whigs"⁶ or by accepting some of the measures introduced by Socialists, has remained well within the mainstream of British political life rather than ending up as political whale stranded on the bank

⁵ Drucker, op. cit, 170.

⁶ The phrase refers to Disraeli's opportunism in championing the 1867 Reform Act.

by a sudden change in current. Indeed, until the general election of 1945 it was quite proper to talk of the Conservative Party as the natural party of government. This adaptability has already been noted earlier, and it has been claimed that modern Conservatism, in at least some of its forms (some might say in its predominant form) owes much to its Liberal opponents. This position may seem unusual when one considers the ferocity with which these opinions were attacked at the time. The sight of the Conservative party standing up for state intervention against 'laissez faire' Liberalism is proudly recounted by Hugh Cecil.

In the 19th century, when Liberalism enforced to the utmost the principle of personal liberty, it was among Conservatives that the authority and control of the State was defended, and, in some instances, enlarged and strengthened.⁷

For British Conservatives such as Cecil, Baldwin, MacMillan and Hailsham this is a simple matter of sensibly avoiding extremes, especially an extreme that presents itself as the current orthodoxy (though an extreme that is orthodox may be an odd idea). Thus, the dangers of 19th century individualism, the "wail of intolerable sufferage"⁸ set up by unrestrained capitalism meant that the rights of the community needed to be stressed. The current danger from Socialist central planning means that the rights of the individual need to be reasserted against the all-powerful State. Conservatives do, of course, disagree on the balance between the two. In modern times we need only to look at the political, economic and social differences between say, Sir Keith Joseph and Mr Edward Heath. Yet both Sir Keith's commitment to the principles of the free market and Mr Heath's espousal of the

⁷ Cecil, op. cit., 170.

⁸ Disraeli, quoted in Hailsham, op. cit., 58.

planned economy (in a limited sense) envisaged by the Brandt Report are both contributions to Conservatism (as opposed to Liberalism, Nationalism or Marxism). The broad span of British Conservatism means that both are members of that ideology, and despite the ascendance of the former at the moment, it may fairly be said that the Centre for Policy Studies is not typical of the way in which British Conservatism has developed. Having stated that this chapter is limited in its scope to British Conservatism, it must be stated that it is not my purpose to write a history of the British Conservative Party since 1832 or whenever. Even if we agree with Cecil's contention that self-conscious Conservatism was brought into being by the trauma of the French Revolution, and has undergone several changes until the present day, what concerns us here is the conceptual unity of that thought, not its chronological development. I shall instead be starting my examination of Conservative thought with Lord Hailsham's "The Case for Conservatism", first published in 1946. Though this work is not admired and accepted by all Conservatives, it does give a reasonably concise account of the main features of Conservatism and I shall draw attention when necessary to any important differences between Hailsham and other Conservative thinkers. "The Case for Conservatism" is also an ideological work; it is a contribution to, as much as a book about, Conservative thought. Not only does the book claim to tell us 'what Conservatism means', it is intended to tell us what Lord Hailsham considers to be the correct Conservative attitude to contemporary issues, and problems. Originally intended as a contribution to "the strictly contemporary politics of opposition"⁹ it is, in its second edition

⁹ Op. cit., preface.

(1959) an attempted vindication of Conservative policies since 1951. This mixture of the 'theoretical' and political practice is quite intentional; the success of Conservative policy in government is the proof of Conservative ideas, which can be seen, through these achievements, to have contemporary relevance. In this sense it is an attempt, albeit an unintentional one, to refute the Marxist view that 'ideologies' (in the Marxist sense) are static views of society.

What view of political activity and man as political agents emerges from Hailsham's book? The first thing to note is the stress placed upon keeping a sense of proportion about politics. It is important to Conservatives that politics is comparatively unimportant.

For Conservatives do not believe that political struggle is the most important thing in life. In this they differ from Communists, Socialists, Nazis, Fascists, Social Creditors and most members of the British Labour Party. The simplest among them prefer fox-hunting - the wisest religion. To the great majority of Conservatives, religion, art, study, family, country, friends, music, fun, duty, all the joy and riches of existence of which the poor no less than the rich are indefeasible freeholders, all these are higher in the scale than their handmaiden, the political struggle ... The man who puts politics first is not fit to be called a civilised being, let alone a Christian.

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Assimilar sentiment is expressed, in a slightly more elegant manner by Oakeshott in the essay referred to earlier. He concludes that being at home in the commonplace world qualifies us "if we are so inclined, and have nothing better to think about, to engage in what the man of conservative disposition understands to be political activity".¹¹ Politics is rather like the sword Excalibur, it is taken out when politics threatens to swamp other areas of human life, but is put away once the danger has been defeated and the important things in life are returned to.

¹⁰ Op. cit., 12-13.

¹¹ Oakeshott, op. cit., 196.

Not only is politics of limited importance, it can only be of limited effect. In his book 'Conservatism', Noel O'Sullivan dubs this "a limited style of politics, based on the idea of imperfection".¹² Conservatives were not attracted by the heady optimism of the enlightenment and its attendant rhetoric. Whereas Tom Paine saw the French Revolution as 'the coming into manhood' of the French people, Burke saw it as proof of the message of Genesis; that Man is a fallen creature and cannot be perfected in this life. The inherent limitations of nature, human and otherwise, means that there were boundaries to what could be achieved by the State or the individual without destroying the stability of society. Not all Conservatives have held Man's imperfections and fallibility to be the result of, say, Original Sin, but they have maintained that human nature cannot be changed or improved by alterations in the environment, or more education as do Liberals and Socialists. When confronted by Mill's argument that ignorance is the cause of misery, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen was quick to retort that getting drunk was not a matter of being unaware of the consequences, but of weakness in the face of temptation.¹³ In this sense, Conservatives stand behind Calvin's interpretation of St Augustine rather than Thomas Aquinas.

The limits of human endeavour are then, quite low in the sphere of politics. They are restricted, not merely because of the limitations of human nature, but because of the complexity of the task that confronts them. Politics is simply not susceptible to 'rational' planning; Burke for example always stressed the limits of reason in comparison with the diversity of human life. Given that political activity is not the most important facet of

¹² N O'Sullivan, Conservatism, (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1976), 12-13.

¹³ Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1873), 26.

human life, Conservatives can quite easily admit this and yet hold that the quality of life is not adversely affected by comparative political impotence. In Oakeshott for example the important things, such as friendship, are not capable of perfection or improvement (in a planned sense) and so no-one should worry overmuch that politics can only have a limited influence.

If, as Burke, Hailsham and Oakeshott all suggest in their different ways, human life is a complicated affair that cannot be easily encapsulated and dealt with, even by 'reason', it is not surprising that British Conservatives have rejected 'abstract' principles as guides to political action, be they the idea of equality, of natural rights or of progress. This position is not based solely on scepticism concerning the practical consequences of the plans of those committed to such ideals. It is based upon the idea that tradition is more fundamental than any of these 'abstractions'.

Conservatives believe that 'reason' cannot be talked about in general, but only in terms of its place in a concrete tradition of ideas such as science or philosophy. In a similar way, 'natural rights' are a fiction, for rights can only exist under a concrete form such as the English legal system, or, for those with a religious bent the Natural Law as Man's participation in the Lex Divina.

Tradition and custom are the key features in any healthy political body. It is this feature that would distinguish between two similar legislatures where one would be the natural continuation of existing institutions and the other based upon the idea of equality simpliciter. For example, supposing that a government, inspired by J S Mill were to set up a parliament, the exact replica of Westminster with parties and so on in an African State that had recently been colonised, on the grounds that these people had natural rights to self-government. Some Conservatives would claim that even if the procedures were identical, the Westminster parliament would be

a genuine case of political development, the African parliament a case of rationalist planning, totally unsuited to its traditional environment and doomed to rapid failure.¹⁴

This point needs to be stressed, lest the fact that much of modern Conservatism is based upon 19th century Liberalism prompt us into thinking that there is no difference between them. As we have already noted, Liberals such as Bentham (and to a lesser extent, Mill) regarded tradition as a form of prejudice, incapable of being demonstrated to be correct and to be contrasted with 'reason'. In short, any tradition was susceptible to external criticism in order to determine whether it was rational or not; for the Conservative, a tradition is a framework from within which criticism is possible. To be sure, Liberals and Conservatives share both arguments and political positions. Both, for example favour a balanced constitution and the separation of executive and legislative power; both see the family and private property as safeguards against all power falling into the hands of the State; both believe in the power of capitalism¹⁵ to create wealth and prosperity. However, whilst Liberals tend to believe in a balanced constitution because it is necessary for the survival of liberty, Conservatives can merely hold that it is the established form of government and can be traced back to the origins of parliamentary democracy. They also differ

¹⁴ Professor R F Torrance, for example, argues that though apartheid is immoral, the answer is not "one man, one vote" since this does not fit in with traditional African ways of deciding matters. Europeans voting systems are 'atomic', African systems are based upon the development of consensus (cf St Benedict's injunction for the solution of disputes in a monastery). Hence the need for 'separate development' of some sort.

¹⁵ The term capitalism is, of course, being used in a non-Marxist sense.

profoundly in the ways that this balance was to be best maintained. J S Mill for example believed that the middle class, as the most dynamic sector of the community, needed to be brought into government by the extension of the franchise. Coleridge¹⁶ on the other hand held that this would be a disaster since it would give the reins of government to a class who, although they had wealth, had no conception of social responsibility; that is, no notion of exercising a stewardship over land and industry on behalf of the nation as a whole. And, if the individual is a key concept in Liberal thought, that of the nation is of equal importance in understanding Conservatism. But, it must be noted on the other side, that the part played by the nation in Conservative thought is not the same as that in right wing radicalism such as Fascism and National Socialism. Not only do right wing radicals see tradition as something that can be swept away,¹⁷ - seeing the human will as expressed through a mass movement being capable of regenerating society - they also believe in the creative energy of the masses when released. This latter point contrasts with the Conservative belief that rule by the masses brings mediocrity rather than excellence. Furthermore, right wing radicals have a plan for society and this will not square with the Conservative notion of limited politics.¹⁸

Tradition is closely related, in Hailsham's book at least, to the notion of change. Like Burke, Hailsham holds an 'organic' view of society rather than a 'mechanistic' one. He is not typical of modern Conservative thought here, for although Burke's emphasis on unity and consensus seems to have survived across the ages, the analogy between the state and a harmonious living organism (comparable perhaps with the Roman Catholic notion of the

¹⁶ See S T Coleridge, Collected Works (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), Vols I and X.

¹⁷ For example, the Nazi view of the family, and the relationship of the state to children.

¹⁸ It is not only right wing radicals that fall foul here. For example, the change that having a plan - even against planning - is still a plan, is levelled/

mystical body of Christ) has been dropped as an explicit assumption in Conservative thought (again, the best known example is Oakeshott). The main point that Hailsham takes from Burke is that 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation'.¹⁹ The State does, and must, change in response to the new circumstances that arise; but this change, in order to be of benefit must involve continuity with what has gone before. The revolutions in France and Russia provide a lesson that demonstrates what occurs when an intransigent authority refuses to see, or contemplate, the need for steady and moderate reform. Reform for Burke was quite acceptable since it was directed to remedying a particular grievance and was in that sense still within the established political framework. The result of this intransigence was simply to force the public into the hands of extremists who, failing to take into account the traditions from which they came and armed with ideas such as liberty, equality and fraternity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, produced a totalitarian dictatorship. The revolutions in France and Russia epitomise what Burke, in contrast to reform, termed change.

(Change) alters the substance of the objects themselves, and gets rid of all their essential good as well as all of the accidental evil annexed to them ...²⁰

Thus any alteration in the political structure of a society must be 'reform' and not 'change', though it needs to be noted here that 'reform' can include actually pressing for alterations. An example of this would be Disraeli pushing through the Second Reform Act of 1867 in order to pre-empt any

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levelled by Oakeshott against Hailsham and Hayek, etc. - "The bug of rationalist politics has finally bitten the Conservative". See Cambridge Journal, Vol I, No 8, 1948, 488.

¹⁹ Quoted in Hailsham, op. cit., 29.

²⁰ Burke, quoted in O'Sullivan, op. cit., 27.

political advantage that might otherwise have gone to the Whigs. The point about such reforms is that they have a continuity with what has gone before, and, on the Burkian model are like the changes in a healthy living organism, they do not disrupt the working of the organism as a whole.

In a wider context, Hailsham is suggesting that if we wish to know what needs to be done, and where, in order to preserve harmony in society, it is tradition, that provides a coherent guide rather than abstract notions such as equality or liberty. Tradition is firmly based upon what has been shown to be possible, not on a future ideal. The notion of tradition here is also related to the question of identity, both personal and social. A person is not an entity that exists for a series of (logically) unconnected fleeting moments. What kind of person X is, is related to the past they have experienced in such a way that to remove that past would be to destroy the possibility of X having any identity at all. We carry our past with us, because without it we are nothing. In a similar way, the identity of a society or nation is related closely to its past, its present identity being partly the consequence of, and partly formed out of, the political, moral and social traditions that it possesses. Traditions cannot, in this sense, be out loose from a society as if they were the impedimenta of a bygone and less satisfactory age. Thus changes (and I am not using the term here in Burke's sense) must take into account the traditions of a society, must retain some continuity with them if a sense of identity is to be preserved. The Massai, as Oakeshott notes, took the place names of their old homelands with them to their new reservations in Kenya. But threats to tradition do not only come from what Conservatives see as muddle-headed attempts to improve life. The coming of industrial society

and the replacement of a rural, agrarian economy by an industrial one has created a mass society in which anonymity is the norm and which has dislocated and in many cases destroyed old ways of living and as importantly, a settled lifestyle. Its failure to replace them with an equally stable form of life clearly poses a problem. The Massai may well have taken the names of their sacred places with them, but the destruction of that life style that made such names, places and the traditions associated with them a viable 'way of life' has simply meant that such names and places no longer play the same part that they did before, and that such a way of life cannot be recaptured or revived. Despite the longings of T S Eliot, we cannot go back to Mediaeval Europe, to the parish community and the Universal Christian State.²¹ It is not clear what can be done here, for to control technological advance in a way that would preserve the 'old' from its ravages would require a degree of political control that would offend both Burke's limited style of politics and modern versions of laissez-faire.

Traditions are not, it is true, always undermined by external factors such as technological change. The lure of wealth or greater material prosperity may undermine an established way of life as surely as technological progress. Older values may fall prey to new standards that allow the creation of greater wealth. In Asia and Africa, older ideals of collective ownership, regulations against money lending and so on may be unable to withstand the

²¹ See T S Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

It is interesting to note how this attitude to the past is shared by some radical socialist who regret the ending of a society and its ways. An excellent example of this, combined with a socialist analysis of the reasons is John McGrath's play about the Highlands since 1745, 'The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil'.

introduction of western business ethics. These changes may be related to technical progress, since it is only with certain developments that Europeans are able to get to Africa and not vice versa, but the possibility of a change is not sufficient to make it occur. A dramatic account of the various elements involved in the destruction of a tradition is provided in the play "The Slaying of the Dragon King". In this play, set in post-revolutionary China, a village is suffering from a potentially disastrous drought. The priest urges prayers to the 'Dragon King', the peasant leader influenced by the communists urges irrigation. The priest is, in the end, defeated by a combination of his own corruption (he has cheated the peasants in the past), the failure of rain to materialise after his prayers, the desire of the peasants for greater material prosperity which is coming to other nearby villages and the victory of the Communists in the rest of China. Conservatives may take comfort from the fact that there is little doubt that something important has been lost by the villagers when they replace the 'Dragon King' with "Invincible Mao-Tse Tung thought".

But, to return to Burke for a moment, it is the fact of rapid change in areas other than politics that has helped to undermine his assumption that the social order was basically sound. In an era of comparatively slow change, traditions of political stability might survive, but in a more technological, industrial and swiftly moving society it is not surprising that such an assumption looks less plausible and is more easily abandoned. The industrial upheavals in 19th century Britain and changes in our own century around the world have made society look less like an harmonious living organism.

A third element in the Conservative notion of tradition is that it cannot be appropriated or understood properly in an instant. This applies both to

the realm of politics and to other matters. The understanding of a tradition, like the learning of a skill, requires an apprenticeship during which time the novice learns from the master craftsman not only the technical details of the trade, but gains the experience and 'feel' for the job that allows him to go on successfully without the masters instruction and, more importantly, to improvise when the books on technique are silent. This, Conservatives believe, is especially true of politics, where the judgement and skill that are necessary for success cannot be learnt, parrot fashion, from a book. It is this view that is at the centre of Oakeshott's claim that the works of Locke, Jefferson and Marx are 'cribs' for those who have no experience of political power, and that the result of relying on them is as disastrous as that which attends the efforts of the kitchen porter who is told to cook a cordon bleu meal with only the recipe book as his guide.²² It also underlies his view that this 'intuitive' understanding must by its very nature be in the hands of a trained elite.

Such a political tradition cannot, of course, be written down. The British Constitution is not, like the Declaration of the Rights of Man, or even the Constitution of the United States, a declaration of 'self-evident' rights and duties - periodically amended or added to - but the embodiment of the accumulated wisdom of past ages. The past lives on, to enlighten the present; tradition is, in Chesterton's phrase "the democracy of the dead". By this he means that death does not disqualify previous generations from influencing the deliberations of the present. Tradition in this sense resides in institutions such as Parliament, the Monarchy and the Church

²² The analogy chosen by Oakeshott is not entirely a fortunate one, since if his wheel maker was to be taken at his word, there could be no tradition at all. See Rationalism in Politics, 9-10.

rather than declarations of rights, and it is these institutions that give stability to political and moral life. (Some Conservatives, Burke, Hailsham, Stephen, for example, hold that Christianity is essential to Conservatism as it provides, through the idea of the Natural Law, the only basis for morality. Certainly it is true to say that in the great political battles of the 18th and 19th centuries the Tories and Conservatives stood up for the established Church against the attacks of non-conformist Liberals and Socialists, but there are quite a few Conservatives who have not been Christians, even if, like Hume they upheld the authority of the established Church.)

The traditions of political life in Britain are, so Conservatives argue, quite alien to ideas of extremism, either of the right or the left. They are also quite unsuitable for the planned economy of socialism or the rational principles of Liberals. In this sense they are peculiarly British; as R A B Butler once put it, it is 'International in some aspects, (but) not for export'. By this he means that Conservatives wish to uphold those institutions that are the foundation of British society and this brings us back to the idea that forcing universal principles onto a tradition can only destroy it and that in the end, the search for the ideal state or human perfection destroys what liberty does exist and leaves a worse state of affairs than that which it was intended to remove, (cf Burke's notion that the Ancien Regime was the appropriate development of French history). Principles may in themselves be praiseworthy, but the result of applying them is invariably bad. Hence Burke's argument that the French suffered both during the Revolution and because of it. The Britishness of British Conservatism might be summed up in Burke's aphorism that "People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors".²³

²³ Quoted in Hailsham, op cit, 87.

Before going on to discuss the Conservative notion of tradition in a more critical manner, other aspects of Conservative thought must be developed. As we have seen, when asked 'What lies behind the stability of political affairs?', British Conservatives will answer 'tradition' and go on to say that the exercise of political authority, because it involves skill and judgement must be in the hands of masters of that art who cannot be those who have had no experience of government but have picked up, say, a copy of Locke's Second Treatise. Thus, unlike Liberals, Conservatives do not see democracy, or the extension of the franchise as being good in themselves because they help realise the 'autonomous' nature of Man. In short, democracy, as 19th century opponents of the extension of the franchise argued, is not necessary for the release of some vital aspect of the human character, but is only useful where the results of such extensions are beneficial to the nation as a whole.²⁴ Where Lord Acton saw the duty of government in increasing (or preserving) individual liberty, Sir Henry Maine saw its duty as promoting the virtues of nationhood,

Democracy ... has exactly the same conditions to satisfy as Monarchy; it has the same functions to discharge, though it discharges them through different organs. These tests of success ... are precisely the same in both cases.

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and if liberty and the preservation of the national existence come into conflict

It is better for a nation, according to an English prelate, to be free than to be sober. If the choice has to be made, and if there is any real connection

²⁴ Modern conservatives would probably argue that universal suffrage in Western democracies is of this nature (for example, it makes takeovers by extremists less likely) but in other cases, eg industrial democracy or giving blacks the vote in Rhodesia, it is not democracy per se that is pursued but the effects it produces.

²⁵ Sir Henry Maine, *Popular Government*, (London: John Murray, 1885) 61.

between Democracy and liberty, it is better to remain a nation capable of displaying the virtues of a nation than even to be free.

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Likewise, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen asserted that the question 'Is Liberty good or bad ?' could not be answered in the abstract, but only in particular cases, ie is X good or bad where X is an example of liberty. Both Maine and Stephen vigorously argued that in fact progress often came as the result of methods of government other than democracy and that the premature handing of power to the uneducated masses would end progress rather than stimulate it.

Rather than have power vested in one section or class, Conservative thinkers, like Liberals, have stressed the value of a balanced constitution.

Bolingbroke for example, rejected both Absolutism and what he termed 'Absolute Democracy' as simple forms of government - the former being 'tyranny', the latter "tyranny and anarchy both".²⁷ Both extremes need a balance which for Bolingbroke is provided through the Patriot King at the head of the nation, uniting it in a common interest, in the manner of the constitution out of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. Thus the majority can be wrong, and when they are, they need as much protection against themselves as they would against the wrong acts of a tyrannical monarch.²⁸

Perhaps the closest alignment of the necessity of an elite with antidemocratic arguments comes in such writers as Stephen and Carlyle. The former argued that, apart from not leading to equality or freedom in the way imagined by J S Mill, democracy inverted the natural relationship between wisdom and folly. For

²⁶ Ibid, 63.

²⁷ H StJ Bolingbroke, *A dissertation on Parties*, Works (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1971), Vol II, 173-9.

²⁸ cf Hailsham's opinion that "a popularly elected tyranny deserves no more support than a self-appointed dictator", op cit, 51.

I think that wise and good men ought to rule over those who are foolish and bad. To say that the sole function of the wise and good is to preach to their neighbours, and that everyone indiscriminately should be left to do what he likes, and should be provided with a rateable share of the sovereign power in the shape of a vote, and that the result of this will be the direction of power by wisdom, seems to me the wildest romance that ever got possession of any considerable number of minds.

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Carlyle simply asserted that

supported by the whole universe, and by some two-hundred generations of men, who have left us some record of themselves there, that the few Wise will have, by one method or another, taken command of the innumerable Foolish

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and that having got hold of power, the wise must hang onto it at all costs, for this has been the backbone of all previous societies that have prospered. "All that Democracy ever meant lies there", he wrote, "the attainment of a truer and truer ARISTOCRACY, or government by the BEST".³¹ What was needed, argued Carlyle, was not the reform of Parliament but 'one True Reforming Statesman', whose wisdom would achieve in ten years what the reformed commons would find beyond its powers in a hundred.³²

²⁹ Op cit, 242.

³⁰ Carlyle, Latter Day Pamphlets No 1, 'The Present Time' (1850).

³¹ Carlyle, Latter Day Pamphlets No 3, 'Downing Street', 79-103.

³² Concentrating so much power thus might seem to contradict the concept of Conservatism extolling the virtues of a politics of imperfection. Such a statesman might make untold mistakes as well as dispense untold wisdom. If the sole criteria were to be success then it would be possible for China or the USSR to claim conservative support thanks to the efforts of a Mao-Tse Tung or Lenin. The difference with the Liberal 'falliblist' such as Popper is shown here.

For Conservatives then, as for some Liberals, there is an implied difficulty in combining democracy with rule by 'the best'. As has been suggested, the locus of this problem has moved away during our own times in the West from the question of the franchise to that of industrial democracy, where the 'threat' of worker-directors is seen as a handicap to efficient business management. Here the argument often revolves around the supposition that without an equal stake in the enterprise of firm, workers (as opposed to shareholders) would not pull their weight, or that as they have less of a stake in the firm, they ought to have less say. This view is echoed, in relation to the franchise, by the Marquis of Salisbury in the Quarterly Review of 1864 where he argued that no 'natural rights' could justify equal suffrage as long as people did not have equal amounts of property to protect. (This argument is in direct line from the argument that claims that the country should be run by those who have the largest stake in its continued prosperity.)

Because democracy can lead to the tyranny of the masses over the individual, it is important that the law, as guarantor of individual freedoms should remain outside of political control, so that the individual has some redress against the state or powerful monopolies such as Trade Unions. Though the state should not allow freedom of the individual to extend to sedition or other such acts, it is proper to defend civil liberties (as opposed to democracy) as the best way of giving citizens a stake in the nation. The question of tyranny, civil liberty and the law is linked here with the distinction between the public and private spheres of life. A distinction which conservatives have held to be vital to the health of the political community. Thus there are a great many issues on which the state should not wish to interfere, even if those issues may have political consequences. An individual cricketer should, for example, be allowed to go to South Africa,

a car driver should not be compelled to wear a seat belt and a worker should not be forced to join a Trade Union against his or her will. The collectivist ethics of the unions would be seen as anathema to the Conservative here. As has been noted elsewhere, the logical relationship between public and private is such that neither can be abolished without destroying the other, but the Conservative is in this sense talking about the encroachment of laws upon matters that were once a question of individual choice. Here the influence of Liberalism, is very strong, for in an earlier age it was certainly true that the church and aristocracy allowed for little to be a matter of choice and interfered a great deal in religion, the arts, science and so on.

How is the past related to all of this ? Certainly, Conservatives do not have a vision of what Man can become, as Marxists do nor do they have an idea of 'progress' from ignorance and superstition to reason, as do Liberals. In this sense, there is no teleological or escatalogical dimension to Conservative thought (except where Conservatives are of a Christian disposition). Two major elements in the Conservative view of the past will be considered here. Firstly, it is the repository of tradition - in this sense Conservatives look back to the past as a guide for present actions, rather than to the dictates of abstract concepts such as 'reason'. Secondly, the past shows the folly of political enterprises that have abandoned tradition and provides a catalogue of the misery that has resulted from well meaning but misguided enterprises to reform or improve mankind. Where the Liberal finds reason releasing the creative powers of men, where previously they have been bridled by superstition and authority, the Conservative finds only a ruinous pursuit of ideals that is inimical to settled behaviour. Where the Marxist sees the casting off of the chains of exploitation, the Conservative sees a new kind of serfdom arising.

The first element is exemplified by David Clarke when he writes

The only text book of conservatism is the history of the British people, their institutions, their traditions, their accumulated wisdom and their character.

33

Later on he tells us

The first care of the Conservative is, therefore, to approach the change historically, to ascertain the purpose and principle of the institution and to safeguard its continuity whatever change of form may be necessary.

34

The second element is found in Burke's 'Reflections', and in the works by Maine and Stephen that have already been cited. Lord Hailsham puts the matter as follows when discussing France. "The unhappy history of that glorious and gifted people since 1789 onwards, is as good an illustration of what Conservatives mean".³⁵

As we have already noted, Burke held that what was wrong with the French Revolution was that it was innovative rather than restorative, as the English revolution of 1688 had been. The cardinal error of the Jacobins had been to try and apply the principles of science to something that was, in principle, unquantifiable viz social life. "Politics" he wrote, "ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature: of which reason is a part, and by no means the greatest part."³⁶

It is important to note here that the 'Reflections' were not simply a commentary on recent French history for those who were interested; they

³³ In Conservatism 1945-50, ed D Clarke (Conservative Political Centre, 1950), 7.

³⁴ Ibid, 12.

³⁵ Op cit, 88 ff.

³⁶ Quoted in F O'Gorman, Edmund Burke (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), 113-4.

were not only a defence of the ancien regime as the most appropriate form of government for the French³⁷ but a warning to the English. Burke saw the French Revolution as only the beginning of a series of revolutions that could even occur in England, given the existence of a pro-Jacobin faction there. These worst fears were confirmed when Paine chose to confide in Burke his wish that 'The Revolution in France is certainly a Forerunner to other Revolutions in Europe'.³⁸ Burke's 'Reflections' were therefore, as much a political act as an account of a series of political acts. They also made his reputation, in a similar way to the manner in which the Russian revolution drew attention to the theories of Marx and Lenin. The seeming truth of Burke's Warnings and predictions appeared to underwrite his social philosophy.

Burke's solution to the French Revolution was an interventionist was against the new government in order to save Europe from universal havoc and atheism. The 'natural aristocracy' must be put back in its proper place before anarchy brought a new Dark Age, and if the French would not co-operate in this, then Britain must take the 'directing part'. A problem here with Burke's position would seem to be his desire to prevent that which is impossible. If the Jacobins and their successors are, in fact, chasing an illusion then this may be foolish, but how can it be harmful? Burke may have thought the France of the Directory an unpleasant place, as his predecessors found the England of the Protectorate and as his successors have found the Soviet Union to be a gigantic prison camp; but the fact that he did not approve of its policies does not make it incoherent, or, at any rate, any more incoherent than the constitution of the United States of America. Like any state, France does have laws which are

³⁷ "It grew out of the habitual conditions, relations and reciprocal claims of men. It grew out of the circumstances of the country, and out of the state of property", O'Gorman, op cit, 129.

³⁸ Letter of 17 Jan 1790, quoted in O'Gorman, op cit, 110.

administered according to rules and as such can legitimately be said to bind its citizens by virtue of the allegiance they owe it by birth. If the laws of our country are repellant (such as those of Nazi Germany) we may well feel that it is our moral duty to oppose them, or to refuse to obey them, but that does not mean that we are not bound by them as citizens. Indeed it is the tension between moral duty and legal obligation that may be said to present us with a moral dilemma in the first place. As we shall see in the final chapter, it is illustrative of the nature of ideological disputes and arguments to compare the attitudes to the French Revolution found in Burke and his great rival, Tom Paine. Much of the dispute, as with Mill and his Conservative critics in the next century, is simply to do with the fact that when Burke (or whoever) says that democracy has led to the decline of good government and Paine (or whoever) says that democracy has brought about good government, they mean different things by the term 'good'. Thus Bolingbroke's aphorism that "The good of the people is the ultimate and true end of all good government" is vacuous unless we can specify some concrete sense of "the good of the people". Sir Henry Maine held that the virtues of nationhood were more important than those of freedom, Mill held the reverse. Does 'good' here mean material well being, or something more? Are those defenders of South Africa correct to select evidence which shows blacks to have higher wages than those in some other African countries, or are their opponents correct to claim that without the right to vote they are slaves, and a well fed slave is still a slave? In this sense, any historical evidence brought forward will usually turn out to be question begging, for one man's decline is another man's progress. The former is what we do not approve of or regret, the latter is not. This, it cannot be stated too strongly, does not mean that the whole process is completely shapeless and arbitrary.

There is no emotivist or subjectivist (or even existentialist) theory at work here. A certain degree of consistency in application is required, and is usually to be found. But it does mean that the enterprise is arbitrary in another sense.

I mean here that there is no rule for determining the descriptive use of a term such as 'progress'.in, say, Liberalism outside of their use in an evaluative way. That is to say, the descriptive use of decline or progress is not separate from their employment as evaluative terms, and evaluation is arbitrary here, for there is no possibility of specifying in advance the criteria for judging between an illegitimate revolution (such as that in France) or a justified revolution or counter coup (eg the English Revolution of 1688 or the wars against France in the 19th century) other than the decision of Conservatives to support one and condemn the other. The same being true of Liberals and Marxists.

When, for example, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen attempts to refute J S Mill's arguments in 'On Liberty' by the reductio ad absurdum of claiming that if they were granted then both Christianity and nonventional morality would collapse, he only appeals to those who think that the contemplation of such an eventuality is absurd or at least undesirable. An existentialist or Muslim might well say that if Christianity or morality cannot stand up to these arguments, then so much the worse for them.

Turning to the past does not, then, show that disaster inevitably occurs when Conservative principles are ignored. At most it shows that many events have occurred in the past which Conservatives do not like, or consider to be dangerous, and that many of these events have been caused by people who have been acting in accordance with principles other than Conservative ones. The economy of Russia may have collapsed after 1917, but it is extremely difficult to show that this is the result of abandoning

Tzarist rule, as opposed, for example, to being the result of the civil war waged by the White Russians or previous defects in the economic system. The fact that China has food shortages and is communist may be countered by the examples of India and the Phillipines which have food shortages and are capitalist.

The second aspect of the Conservative view of history under consideration here is that of the past as the repository of tradition. The two points are, as we have seen, related to the extent that the abandonment of tradition for reason can lead to political disaster. Though the charge of rationalism is often well founded, both in intellectual terms, and in the (for Conservatives) satisfying sense that they have been utter failures, this is not true of all changes attributable to the exercise of principles. The case of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which introduced prohibition might be considered a rationalist failure. Good intentions only served to make the matter they were attempting to solve a great deal worse, due to unintended and (possibly) unforeseen consequences. But against this we might urge consideration of the extension of the franchise to women and the establishment of the framework of the welfare state and National Health Service. Certainly some of those who argued for these steps based them upon 'abstract' principles, but it is not entirely clear that they have ushered in a decline in British political life equivalent to that brought about by prohibition. Indeed, the acceptance of both measures by all political parties may be seen as proof of their success. The point is not just that they have confounded the pessimists, but that they have shown 'abstract' principles can and do play a part in political life. The dichotomy posed between traditional modes of thought and ideals may not be as complete as it appears since the latter may be part of the former and can be the appropriate reason for

doing X, where X is a piece of legislation. An example of this might be a Roman Catholic's belief in the equality of all men before God, or sanctity of human life, playing a part in their decision to vote for legislation on immigration or abortion. Oakeshott claims that the decision to give women the vote was the result of changes that had taken place in the position of women due to changes in circumstances during and after the Great War, such that the old strictures were no longer appropriate.³⁹ But, as Professor Barry points out,⁴⁰ some of these changes were themselves the result of 'progressive' or 'rational' legislation pioneered by Liberal ideologists such as Mill in the Victorian House of Commons. Not only can reasons in this sense be the cause of political change, the understanding of such 'rational principles' may be indispensable to the understanding of certain kinds of political action. Though such principles may, strictly speaking, be mere 'idle wheels' at a theoretical level they are engaged in political practice. Could we understand the policies of Mill or Bentham without understanding the part played by reason, or could we understand the story of the Bolshevik seizure of power without understanding the part played by Marxist theory in their deliberations about what to do? In short, such ideals and principles do succeed at a certain level - that of communicating to supporters which objectives are to be aimed for.

It is, of course, also the case that the planning rejected by Oakeshott and others has had both success and failure. Spectacular disasters such as Brasilia might be contrasted to Edinburgh's New Town or Paris. At a common sense level, Conservatives have to explain how France, Japan and

³⁹ See Rationalism in Politics, 80-110.

⁴⁰ B Barry, Political Argument, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 56-8.

other countries they admire as successes, at least economically, also have high levels of intervention and planning.

A second point is the question of how we can tell whether a development is a genuine development of a tradition or an aberration from it. The tradition itself cannot do this, outside of recognised authorities who interpret it. An example of this would be the authority of the Synod of Bishops in the Catholic Church or the MCC at cricket. What is important here is that the authority in question be agreed upon by any parties who dispute a matter of doctrine or cricketing law. Part of the trouble with a political tradition, in the sense used by Hailsham and others, is that there is no single way of interpreting it. What the Labour Party sees as a legitimate extension of the parliamentary system, or of democracy to other areas of life, may be seen by Conservatives as a radical departure from that tradition. There is in fact a distinction to be made between doing things traditionally and doing things according to a tradition. An example of this is the controversy in the Roman Catholic Church over liturgical reform (in particular the abandoning of the 'Tridentine' Mass for the Missa Normativa) or the debate amongst Anglicans about the ordination of women. One side argues that the old rite, or the old ban on women priests must be maintained, the other claims that in the light of the tradition, such innovations should be made. The difference is, of course, that in the examples used, there is a common authority to be invoked, and the only way that Conservatives in these churches can protest once the decision is made is by leaving. In the Reformation both Luther and Calvin refused to be bound by the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, although it claimed to be based upon a tradition stretching back 1500 years and appealed to the Bible as a more fundamental authority, claiming that the true Christian tradition stemming from the Apostles had been submerged by the deviations of the Papacy.

This distinction is also important when we consider the objection made to the Benthamite account of 'reason', namely that 'reason' cannot exist outside of a concrete tradition of thought. We cannot reason in the abstract, but only in accordance with canons of thought that are enshrined in, or at least related to, existing modes of thinking (otherwise we would be at a loss to know what anyone meant). In this sense, the Liberal is not doing what he sets out to do, ie to subject all traditions to the test of rationality, since rationality needs a tradition in the logical sense. But even if this is granted and even if we can also rule out other efforts to replace tradition in this limited sense as incoherent, this does not get us very far towards accepting a Conservative's political prescriptions. As we have just seen, reasoning according to a tradition cannot dictate, a priori, what decisions we should take over the Latin Mass or whether women should become priests. The demands of a tradition are quite different from the logic of argument that a tradition imposes. Or, to put matters another way, tradition in the sense of 'things have always been done in this way' is different from tradition in the sense of a concrete and distinct manner of thinking which provides a framework for the use of the term 'rational' in that context: and belief in the latter does not imply acceptance of the former.

In short, we can accept the importance of tradition, but argue that X or any particular political act is a genuine development within a tradition, and thus avoid the practical consequences the Conservative wishes to force upon us.

There is, perhaps, the tendency here to lump together too much when we talk of tradition and to speak as if the term referred to an homogenous entity. The fact that there are traditions in British political life and traditions in fishing or cricket does not mean that they are all of the same sort.

Not all political traditions may be the sort that Conservatives approve of. Each year at the Durham Miners Gala (and, no doubt, at other similar occasions) leading members of the Labour Party extol the virtues of working class traditions such as loyalty, solidarity and political radicalism. The defence of a worthwhile way of life, centred around the ability of a man to work for a living, depends upon the maintenance of such traditions against those of cost-efficiency and the 'philosophy' of individualism that Unions were formed to combat. It is not a question of deciding which tradition is the correct one (how would one do so ?) but of noting that the examination of the past can strengthen and nurture other political traditions and other ways of doing things. And, it can also reveal traditions that are quite inimical to Conservatives. Along with the Liberals who ran the British Empire, Conservatives were none too careful to preserve the traditions of native life in Indian villages. In the case of some (Fiszjames Stephen, for example) this was justified on the grounds that they smacked of the mediocrity imposed by socialist types of thought!

The existence of what I have termed 'working class' traditions highlights a tension in Conservative thought here. Such traditions are concerned, not only to resist the power of the state, but of the rapacious individual. That is to say, unlike Conservatives they wish to resist the encroachments of private capital rather than state intervention (and in some cases see the latter as protection against the former). We have seen how in the 18th and 19th centuries Conservatives were prepared to defend the village community against the encroachment of the mass producing factory and how some Conservatives have seen the return to smaller units of government and community as the solution to many of our present problems. One paradox of this is that such views are now radical, in the sense that they would

demand changes that are 'large and sudden' rather than 'small and steady', and that 'real' conservatives may turn out to be radicals in disguise.

But the mainstream of Conservative thought in our present century has seen the main enemy, not as Liberal individualism, but as Socialist collectivism. Thus the emphasis has been on protecting the rights of the individual against those of the state and encouraging the pursuit of individual excellence against the trend to conformity.

The result of this move has been an attachment to the economics of capitalism (in some cases in the Adam Smith version) with its emphasis on the pursuit of profit and its tendency to merge into fewer, but more powerful conglomerates. The existence of private monopolies and cartels (which in some cases can easily rival the state run monopolies, which are usually confined to public utilities and economic infrastructure) can not only be destructive towards a settled way of life in other parts of the world, but can also only survive by constant innovation and expansion. Economic freedom and social stability are not always reconcilable; nor can they be arrested by the forces of government without creating a further tension.

At both the practical and theoretical level, British Conservatism is an alliance of several groups in which a particular element may, at any specific time, be dominant. In our own time, the dominant section is that which draws its economic ideas primarily from Liberals and has extolled the virtues of the individual, perhaps at the expense of the wider community. This, as has been suggested, can lead to a conflict between the demands of economics and those of culture (in a broad sense); for the pursuit of excellence in one undermines the basis of the other. This may be apparent where capitalism 'engages' in African and Asian countries but is also true of, say, an economy such as Western Germany where economic progress may be said to be coupled with social and cultural decline and the erosion of

a stable way of life. The fact that modern Conservatism occupies this area has had the effect of pushing Liberalism much more towards the interventionist stand that we noted earlier: in going along this road they have encountered disillusioned socialists retreating from the Labour Party. This movement should come as no surprise to us since, though it may be justly asserted that ideologies try and formulate absolute principles (eg all men are equal, all history is the history of class struggle, human nature is imperfectable), these principles are only expressed in concrete political situations which are relative. In other words a particular political programme that was neither distinctive nor related to contemporary issues and problems would be of little political use.

II

It is now time to turn, as with Marxism and Liberalism, to the writings of those Conservatives who will show the ideological view of the past in their writings. In the case of Conservatism I have chosen Paul Johnson. Some may feel this to be a strange choice, on the grounds that Johnson is a journalist rather than an historian. But this would be to misunderstand my case; for the point I am trying to establish is the relationship between the understanding of the past and the categories of an ideology, not the relationship with a certain class of people - historians. What is important is that Johnson sees the study of the past illuminating his prescriptions for the present, and the manner in which he articulates this view, not what he does for a living. Johnston is an interesting case in several ways. Firstly, he is an example of someone who has changed sides, having been at one time a radical (rather than Marxist) Socialist and now a Thatcherite Conservative.⁴¹ As we shall see, this change of allegiance has affected

⁴¹One is reminded of the story of a Catholic prelate interviewed about the Catholic position on contraception, who replied that the Church's position was one of absolute certainty. When asked what would be the position if the Papal Commission changed that view he replied "Then/

the content, but not the form of his writings. Secondly, his view of Conservatism shows how deeply some of the ideas we associate with 19th century Liberalism have penetrated the modern Conservative party and exemplifies, therefore, the process of change within an ideology itself. Thirdly, he belongs broadly to the British school of polemics and can, to that extent, be understood in conjunction with writers such as Burke, Paine and for that matter, E.P. Thompson.

What I intend to do here is to look at three of Johnson's more recent works, The Offshore Islanders,⁴² The Enemies of Society⁴³ and The History of the Modern World 1917-83.⁴⁴ Though distinct works, written at different stages in Johnson's political odyssey, there are certain common themes that are worthy of our attention. I will also be looking briefly at some of Johnson's writings in the 'New Statesman' to set the scene.

The fact that Johnson has undergone a radical change of opinion from the heady days in which he abandoned the editor's chair in the New Statesman offices and went to Paris to witness les evenements at first hand, is not, of itself, important. The ease with which he was able to come to some of his judgements at the time, is, as we shall see, of somewhat greater importance; for as I shall suggest, the author who finds Cohn-Bendit as jovial Robespierre,⁴⁵ who describes Paris in 1968 as having spring air loaded with intellectual incense,⁴⁶ and who judges that "the French have given birth to a new revolutionary spirit which will eventually enhance the lives of all of us"⁴⁷ is one of a kind with the author who finds the French spring a schoolboy imitation of 1848 and

^{41/} the Church will have moved from one state of certainty to another." The same can be said of Johnson who has moved from leftist convictions to right wing ones without much doubting in between.

⁴² London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972

⁴³ London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977

⁴⁴ London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983

⁴⁵ New Statesman, Vol 75, p675

⁴⁶ Ibid, p675

⁴⁷ Ibid, p675. The titles of Johnson's articles in the bibliography are

who fulminates against Marxism-Freudianism some fifteen years later. Certainly, the rhetorical and polemical style of argument, with its emphasis on 'knocking down' an opponent's position is present from the start, and to this extent we can say that Johnson has always been a thoroughly ideological writer, concerned to carry his readers towards action of some sort, rather than a disinterested observer of events. But how exactly does Johnson see the past as important to his enterprise ? The Offshore Islanders, written in 1972 at the height of the debate about Britain's entry into the EEC (though this may be a coincidence) is, for example, an attempt to locate the present state of Britain within an identifiable context and to reflect on its causes, before pondering the question 'What will become of the British ?'. As Johnson puts it

I was conscious all the time that the failures (of the Labour Government 1964-70) lay not merely in the limitations of the men and women who composed the government, but in the nation as a whole, in its institutions and the attitudes which shaped them ... The failure of a government merely epitomised and reflected the diminution of a people. Was this process natural, indeed inevitable ? Was it even desirable ? What precisely did we mean by failure ? ... These questions naturally provoked others. What sort of people did the English wish to be, and what kind of country did they prefer to inhabit ?⁴⁸

Now in order to make something of this, we need, according to Johnson, to look back to the past for "the more he (the journalist) tries to understand the present, the more he is driven to probe into the past, in search for explanations".⁴⁹ An example of this would be the commentator attempting to understand the strife in Northern Ireland. Not only would he have to look back to 1920 and the roots of partition,

⁴⁸ The Offshore Islanders, pp4-5

⁴⁹ Ibid, p3

but to 1688 and the Protestant ascendancy and to the middle ages and the origins of English interference. This ~~view~~ has two consequences. Firstly, the historian must influence the contemporary debate, for those seeking to understand the present through looking at the historical roots will inevitably be subject to the judgement of historians. Secondly, it is clear that Johnson sees history as a seamless continuum of chronology, rather than a distinctive logical framework for the understanding of events. As he puts it, "the frontier of history ends only with yesterday's newspaper".⁵⁰ One particular problem worth mentioning here is that of when to stop going back into the past. After all, why stop with the Roman invasion, since we would need to know why the Romans invaded and so on. Johnson is simply ~~w~~rong to assume that we are propelled by some logical necessity to go back in this way. Even so, it is not surprising, to find Johnson ~~start~~ing the Offshore Islanders with the story with the withdrawal of the Romans in 406. Without wishing to summarise the book in any great detail, a number of themes might be mentioned. Firstly there is the idea that the book itself is the product of a period of despondency and that what is now needed is a fresh maturity of approach stemming from this ~~c~~omprehension of the nation's past.⁵¹ Secondly there is the argument that the decline of Britain in the Twentieth Century stems from a combination of hubris (overwhelming pride) and nemesis (~~t~~etributive justice). It is interesting to note here that Johnson locates the seeds of this in the thoughts of John Ruskin and his articulation of the late 19th century Imperial ideal, an ideal which - so Johnson claims - is quite contradictory to the

⁵⁰ Ibid, p3

⁵¹ Ibid, p430

spirit in which the Empire was gained. These views led to the prolongation of the Empire, an institution which had brought nothing but evil to the English ~~themselves~~,⁵² by allowing them to overestimate their strengths and underestimate their weaknesses. It also had the effect of featherbedding British industry by 'spreading the area in which British inefficiency mattered less'.⁵³ Thirdly, there is the theme that involvement in the Continent, via two world wars has hastened Britain's decline. Fourthly, there is the argument that the British have always regarded stability above adventure and creativeness, with a consequent passivity in the present century. Fifthly, there is the view that the powerlessness of the Labour Party to effect radical change has been due to - amongst other things - its failure to accord sufficient priority to education; for educational failure is at the root of Britain's decline as a dynamic society and has held back economic growth. Finally, there is a discussion of Britain's decline and its relationship to liberalism (as exemplified by the Labour Party of 1972) in which Johnson concludes that the failures are not those of liberalism but of insufficient liberalism, and that we must now resume the quest for improvements in liberalism and the appropriate institutional reforms.⁵⁴

The upshot of this is that the English now find themselves in a dangerous position, bitter at the loss of Empire and without a compensatory role: what they need to do is to renew themselves and to embrace the fresh experience that their position leads them to. As we shall see, Johnson does not hold on to all of these positions. The important point to note is the tone of his argument and its intermingling of the past, present and future. The failures of the English can be overcome

⁵² Ibid, p347

⁵³ Ibid, p335

⁵⁴ Ibid, especially pp409-430

by renewal; understanding the past will show us the false steps we have taken and give us encouragement by showing that we have been down before and recovered.

Compared with 'A History of the Modern World', 'The Offshore Islanders' is, in one sense, parochial. Though it goes back further into the past it tells the story of a nation and its struggles. The later book paints a broader, if shallower, canvas taking us from the Russian Revolution to the 1980's. Like Perry Anderson, it covers an enormous amount of ground in every continent through a wide number of secondary sources. The book has two main currents running through it. Firstly, it offers a trip through the present century, noting the key events from the Russian Revolution, through the rise of Hitler to the Cold War, Vietnam and super-power diplomacy. This chronicle is enlivened by a number of 'controversial' re-assessments of some of the leading actors on the stage. Thus we find that the American presidents to admire in this century are not Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy, but Calvin Coolidge, Warren Harding and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Gandhi, for example, is seen as "a political exotic", obsessed with bowel movements and quite unfit to lead India to independence.⁵⁵ The leaders of independent Africa and Asia get similar short shrift, as does Keynes (the Economic Consequences of the Peace is described as "One of the most destructive books of the century").⁵⁶

Secondly, there is the theme of the causes of our present miseries, real enough to Johnson. Rather strangely, this story starts with Einstein, for giving us the theory of relativity. This, according to Johnson, has undermined belief in absolutes - if space and time are no

⁵⁵Op cit, pp470-471

⁵⁶Op cit, p 30

longer absolutes, then how can moral standards possibly have any claim to ultimate objectivity?⁵⁷ The step from relativity to relativism, though recognised by Johnson as being, perhaps, erroneous, is one which he alleges the present century has made. This fits in with certain themes in 'The Enemies of Society', but for our present purposes it is enough to note that Marx and Freud are condemned as prime underminers of values and Trotsky and other 'revolutionaries' of both left and right have seized on these justifications to attack civilisation. Moral relativism has made possible the political terrorism of the 1970's. This is linked with the decline of religion and its absolute injunctions. A passage that sums up the favour of the book is the following.

Among the advanced races, the decline and ultimately the collapse of the religious impulse would lead a huge vacuum. The history of modern times is in great part the history of how that vacuum has been filled. Nietzsche rightly perceived the the most likely candidate would be what he called 'the Will to Power' ... In place of religious belief there would be secular ideology. Those who had once filled the ranks of the totalitarian clergy would now become totalitarian politicians. And, above all, the Will to Power would produce a new kind of messiah, uninhibited by any religious sanctions whatever, and with an unappeasable appetite for controlling mankind. The end of the old order, with an unguided world adrift in a relativistic universe, was a summons to such gangster- statesmen to emerge. They were not slow to make their appearance.⁵⁸

The theme of cultural and moral decline is unmistakable. The causes of this decline are the army of academics (through the law of 'unintended consequences'), the dictators of the war and of the new nations in Africa and Asia, the pseudo-intellectuals influenced by Marx and Freud and those who have failed to uphold the traditional values of Western civilisation - the betrayers of moral absolutism.

⁵⁷ Assubsidary culprit here is G.E. Moore's 'Principia Ethica'

⁵⁸ Op cit, p48

Related to moral decline is economic freedom. For Johnson, economic freedom and political freedom are inseparable, thus the free market economy (dismissed in the late 1960's) is the only guarantee of individual liberty and moral worth. The free market is the dynamic element in growth and anything that undermines it (such as inflation) is itself a moral evil. In short, the good men of our present century are those who have defended absolute standards and the free market, the bad men those who have espoused the philosophy of collectivism and moral relativism.

The 'Enemies of Society' proceeds along much the same lines, Indeed, it is possible to argue that 'A History of the Modern World' makes concrete some of the claims in the earlier book. In particular, the role of intellectuals is vigorously examined to see if, and how, they have defended or attacked society and civilisation. But that is to move too far ahead. As the introductory paragraphs of 'Enemies of Society' make clear, the relationship between past and present is still at the front of Johnson's mind. He writes

The exhilaration of the long, post-war book is over and we now harbour a growing number of doubts about the future of our societies and the civilisation which embraces them ... The Cassandras of our time are divided between those who struggle to save the civilisation of the West from itself and its enemies, and those who deny it is worth saving. Where does the truth lie ?

This book is an attempt to answer such questions, and many others that are relevant to the well-being of humanity. We shall start the quest at the beginning, not by analysing the ills, real or imaginary, of our present civilisation, but by inspecting its roots, the factors and forces that brought it into being over many centuries ... We shall, in the first instance, try to isolate the matrices, whether political, economic

or cultural, of a progressive civilisation, and then to examine whether, and if so how, such a civilisation can decline and disappear. Then, having established our historical model we shall be ready to investigate the origins and development of western society and to weigh ... its prospects of survival.⁵⁹

In line with this, Johnson starts his exploration with the growth of the Greek city states and, more importantly, the decline of the Graeco-Roman world, for it is in this decline - caused by the decline of political and economic freedoms personified in the urban middle class - that we see the model of civilisation working; first its rise and then its fall.

We then approach our own time, with the constant and now familiar reminder of the positive relationship between political and economic freedom ("it is surely no coincidence that the Industrial revolution and the creation of western capitalism were followed by the development of democracy in the West"⁶⁰) and the importance of the urban middle class in the development of culture and freedom ("there is ... a close connection between cultural progress ... and technical and economic achievement. All (painters, scientists, craftsmen) were seeking freedom ... all were drawn from the middle section of society and in an urban atmosphere"⁶¹). At the end of this trail is the unparalleled growth that took place in Western economies between 1945 and 1973, a period in which capitalism really seemed to produce the goods and place them within the grasp of the working class. The hero of this part of the story is Keynes, for it was he who successfully balanced the equation of private gain and public service. As Johnson puts it "If Keynes cannot claim posthumous credit for assistant the post-war boom, no thinker

⁵⁹Op cit, pp 1-2

⁶⁰Ibid, p 68

⁶¹Ibid, p51

in history can claim credit for introducing anything".⁶²

But it is at this very moment of triumph, when capitalism appears to have solved the problems of prosperity with humanity, that doubt sets in. The problem Johnson now addresses himself to is that of why there should have been this loss of confidence in capitalism and a rejection of its values. There are, three related sets of reasons that he enumerates. Firstly, there is the purely contingent fact of the world depression, started by the Yom Kippur war of 1973 and the subsequent rise in oil prices; a process which in effect added an automatic inflationary twist to the western economies. Interestingly enough, Keynes is not blamed for this, the failures of economic policy in the 1970's are not those of Keynesian theory. This has undermined confidence simply by demonstrating that growth is not automatic and that the economic system can still be thrown into reverse by unforeseen circumstances.

But clearly this is not enough to account for the deeper malaise that Johnson detects. The two key reasons here are the deliberate attack on society by the enemies of western liberal democracies and the failure of those who should be its defenders to come to its aid. Each civilisation inevitably has within it the seeds of its own destruction, its best hope of survival is to locate those seeds at an early enough stage. The attack on truth, as Johnson calls it, takes a number of forms.

As we have seen, he argues that the economic problems of the 1970's, caused a trauma in western confidence. Into this vacuum has poured a vociferous anti-growth lobby of conservationists and environmentalists who have tried to undermine the belief in growth per se. Secondly,

⁶² Ibid, p83

there has been an attack on language itself and the undermining of linguistic truth - or at least language as the framework of reason - by the growth of jargon and a number of dubious academic and pseudo-academic subjects such as sociology and psychology. Thirdly, we return to the decline of Christianity and the belief in an external arbiter and, therefore, of absolute standards. In this instance, the defenders of Christian truth have helped the invaders over the wall of the citadel they are supposed to be defending, by indulging in woolly minded ecumenism and 'pop' theology which has (shades of Alasdair MacIntyre) drained it of all empirical content and, therefore, of any claim to truth.

Fourthly, philosophy, which ought to be at the forefront of the battle against 'the forces of unreason' has lost itself in irrelevant linguistic puzzles which do not set standards. The result of this is that a whole generation of philosophers has done no useful philosophical work at all. Fifthly, science has declined in standing in the west and there has been a shift away from physics (properly the queen of the sciences) towards more dubious, immature sciences especially by governments interested in planning 'social engineering'. The importance of the decline of science is that, for Johnson, the method of science is the method of civilisation. By this he means that the formulation of hypotheses which can be empirically falsified by tests. Civilisation and science are inextricably linked and the decline of one will cause the decline of the other. Thus one of the key areas in which the enemies of society attack western civilisation is through the attack on science and its replacement by pseudo-science of the Marxist-Freudian variety.

If science is a crucial subject to be undermined, then the universities are the crucial institutions for our enemies to assault. Unfortunately,

the defenders of academic standards appear to have given up, and the 'Fascist Left' seems to have taken over. Though Britain has trebled the number of places in higher education since the war, this had had no appreciable (beneficial) effect upon our economic performance or the GNP, but has merely brought ruin through the destruction of the real purpose of academic pursuits and their replacement by the rabble of the polyochracy.

What, as Lenin might have asked, is to be done? Johnson opts for two answers. The first is "to identify the malign forces quickly, as and when they appear. That has been the chief purpose of this book"⁶³. The second is to reassert certain salient principles which are essential to uphold. Hence the final chapter is devoted to outlining 'a new Deuteronomy', "a new and secular Ten Commandments, designed not, indeed, to replace the old, but rather to update and reinforce their social message".⁶⁴ These new commandments can be summarised in the following way. Firstly, there must be moral absolutes. Secondly, we must reject violence as a political tool. Thirdly, democracy is the least evil form of government. Fourthly, the rule of law is essential. Fifthly, we must always stress the importance of the individual. Sixthly, we must support the values of the middle classes. In the seventh place we must acknowledge the importance of freedom. Eighthly we must beware of the destruction of language. Ninthly, we must trust science, and finally we must always pursue truth.

Such a series of summaries cannot do justice to all of Johnson's ideas and arguments. Nor can the nature of this thesis allow us to go into as much detail as we would like on some of those same ideas and arguments.

⁶³Op cit, p255

⁶⁴Ibid, p255

The purpose of this section is, after all, to point out where and how Johnson fits into our conception of an ideologist using the past to illuminate the political causes he is currently supporting. All three books are fairly clear examples of that art, explicitly so. And one can imagine the scorn with which Johnson would greet any attempt to suggest that this should not be the case. Part of his conviction is that everyone should be defending liberal democracy and the free market with whatever tools and weapons are available, whether they be the intellectual equivalent of a cannon or a pitchfork.

The logic of Johnson's thought might become more apparent if we examine some small part of it in a bit more detail. In 'A History of the Modern World' for example, we are greeted in the first sentence with the claim that "The modern world began on 29th May 1919 ..." with the confirmation of Einstein's theory of relativity (though Johnson later admits that the final proof of the theory came some years later⁶⁵). This is in itself instructive of how a non-historian might wish to see epochs and eras starting and ending, rather than the more mundane concern of history simply to link together what happened with what preceded and with what followed it. This view is confirmed if we consider that what is unhistorical about this approach is not the idea of eras having a start per se, but rather the key event which is said to start them. In Johnson's case it is the idea of a scientific experiment (or hypothesis) undermining part of a culture and that culture's faith in itself. In this sense, it is not the start of a new era in the way that someone might start a book on European history with an essentially arbitrary event such as the discovery of America by Columbus. The artificiality of Johnson's division is simply that

⁶⁵Op cit, p3

as he admits himself, the relationship between Einstein's theory of relativity and the relativism he seeks to attribute to it as an unconscious by-product, is not one of historical cause and effect, but essentially historical.

In general, one would want to make ~~two~~ distinct types of criticisms of Johnson. The first is to do with the level of accuracy and, for want of a better word, truthfulness of his account. For example, the account of Gandhi and the road to independence in 'A History of the Modern World' will scarcely satisfy the rigorous academic. Gandhi's interest in bowel movements, his rejection of sex and his pacifism are, perhaps, parts of the the story. But it is difficult to believe that merely drawing attention to them in this way is enough to account for, and lead to, a balanced judgement of, the man and his role. For example, we find this assessment of Gandhi:

Gandhi was not a liberator but a political exotic, who could only have flourished in the protective environment provided by British liberalism. He was a year older than Lenin with whom he shared a quasi-religious approach to politics, though in sheer crankiness he had much more in common with Hitler, his junior by twenty years.⁶⁶

We also discover that he ate heartily and that his avowed poverty was hypocritical because it was expensive for others to maintain him in that lifestyle.⁶⁷ Finally, his policies were all inappropriate to India, and if followed would have led to 'mass starvation'.⁶⁸ Now, one does not need to be Sir Richard Attenborough to find this a rather bizarre and one-sided account.

The clear implication in linking Gandhi with Hitler and Lenin is that the misfortunes of India are his fault in a way that the misfortunes of

⁶⁶Op cit, p470

⁶⁷Ibid, p471

⁶⁸Ibid, p471

Germany and the USSR can be laid at the door of the two great dictators. If the account of Gandhi and his role in Indian politics is superficial and misleading (and one might add here, makes little attempt to understand the role of passive resistance, hunger strikes and so on within Indian culture - as opposed to seeing them as cranky or hypocritical) it is because Johnson has lost sight of the advantage that hindsight will always give in judging the success of actions. But explaining why something came about needs to keep this in check, otherwise the past becomes one foolish mistake after another that the all-wise historian can pontificate about.

A second example of Johnson's rather cavalier treatment of the past is his account of the Chilean coup in 1973. Allende and his government come over as incompetent, indecisive and as the main precipitators of the coup. When the coup came, we are told that "most of the resistance came from non-Chilean refugees ..." ⁶⁹ and that "The opposition to Pinochet, though noisy, came chiefly from abroad. It was cleverly orchestrated from Moscow ..." ⁷⁰. Again, one does not need to know a great deal about the subject matter to feel that the two pages Johnson allocates to the episode certainly leaves out a great deal of material. One might reasonably ask for the destabilisation policy of Henry Kissinger, the United States pressure on international credit and so on to explain some of the events. Furthermore, there is plenty of evidence to throw doubt on the assertion that opposition to Pinochet was mainly external. But what is of equal interest here is the way in which Johnson finishes off his account of Chile by linking it to the relation-

⁶⁹ Ibid, p725

⁷⁰ Ibid, p725

ship between freedom and the market economy. He tells us that "Though foreign criticism concentrated on the repressive aspect of Pinochet's regime, the more important one was the decision to reverse the growth of the public sector ... and open the economy to market forces ... Market economics by definition involved a withdrawal by the state from a huge area of decision making, which was left to the individual. Economic and political liberty were inseparably linked. Freedom of the market inevitably led to erosion of political restraints: that was the lesson of Taiwan, Thailand and South Korea".⁷¹ One cannot avoid the impression that Chile is an example of a general thesis rather than an account of a series of events for the sake of their own intelligibility. And the general thesis is one which both begs the question of whether this is an acceptable way to achieve even the most laudatory of aims and whether Chile will in the future follow the same path as Taiwan or Korea.

A third example of the failure ~~to~~ live up to academic standards can be taken from 'Enemies of Society' where in Chapter 10 he is discussing the role of philosophers. In all honesty one can only say that the account offered is a travesty of academic reasoning. A large number of philosophers who should not be grouped together are thrown into vast bran tubs with titles such as 'Cambridge philosophers' or 'analytic philosophers' without much attempt being made to understand their arguments at all. The picture of faintly eccentric old buffers wandering aimlessly around quadrangles, wondering if time is real may make a funny novel, but is not really the kind of work one would expect from a defender of reason. Indeed, when Johnson discusses

⁷¹ Ibid, pp725-726

(if that is the right word) the work of Wittgenstein, one wonders if he has understood anything at all; the fact that he uses the well known quotation from Russell on the 'Philosophical Investigations',⁷² suggests not. The claim that for two generations "no useful work has been done in large traditional areas of philosophy"⁷³ is simply false, unless one has a peculiar idea of what it is that philosophers should be doing in the first place. The fact that many have abandoned large scale metaphysical theories may distress Johnson, but if they offer philosophical reasons for doing so, it is hard to see what grounds for complaint he has. One of the ironies of Johnson's attack is that he does not realise that some of his enemies agree with him on far more occasions than he thinks. Wittgenstein was, for example, often depressed by the state of the world in which he lived and a conservative rather than a radical.

The second type of criticism is over the type of claim that Johnson sees himself as making between, for example, moral relativism, moral absolutes and civilization. One problem here is the uncertainty one feels over the concept of 'relativism' in Johnson's writings. There are at least two types of 'relativism' that can be distinguished in this context. Firstly, one might consider the 'relativism' of the Protagorus, where Man is seen as the measure of all things. This is the kind of 'relativism' that Johnson probably has in mind. Secondly, there is a different kind of 'relativism' where it can be held that certain kinds of moral judgement clash in a way that precludes just judging them by an agreed standard, or where there are no objective, agreed, grounds to judge between, say, two widely differing cultures. The point of this

⁷²Op cit, pp134-135

⁷³Ibid, p136

second type is not that we cannot make judgements at all, but that our judgements are of a certain kind, in which we do not give a privileged metaphysical status to our own set of criteria. It is this type of 'relativism' that is held by the philosophers that Johnson attacks and so many of his arguments simply miss the point altogether. For example, in his 'Lecture on Ethics', Wittgenstein discusses the nature of a moral judgement and is quite clear that it has an absolute character rather than a relative one.⁷⁴ However, he then goes on to argue that moral absolutes from different religious or ethical traditions may clash in such a way that there is not clear right answer as to what X should do in case Y. Nothing Johnson says undermines this. We can perfectly well imagine a Johnsonian absolutist faced with a moral dilemma about, say, abortion and having no better guidance from an absolute set of principles than our 'relativist' (in sense two of the term). In short, to be a 'relativist' in our second sense does not imply that 'anything goes' (as Johnson seems to think), nor does his kind of absolutism lead to any greater certainty in moral dilemmas that there is a right answer to be chosen.

Furthermore, Johnson's thesis seems implausible in a number of ways. In the first place, it is difficult to see either concept of relativism as the product of our own century, for both have long traditions behind them. Secondly, it is hard to produce a convincing account of the past in which decline and destruction can be said to have been caused by the adoption of 'relativist' opinions, without begging the question of decline versus tolerance. Equally importantly, there are a number of counter examples where absolutism appears to have caused a number of events that Johnson might describe as undesirable. Absolutism does not, of itself, bring enlightenment, as a modern Iranian might agree and

⁷⁴L. Wittgenstein, A lecture on Ethics, Philosophical Review, 1965, vol. 74

one could produce a huge list of atrocities brought about by, or at least carried out in the name of, Christian values, the Koran or several other systems of absolute values. Whatever Johnson's examination of the past does show, it does not provide any proof that civilization depends on what he terms 'absolute' beliefs.

A final comment here is that it is perfectly possible to be sympathetic towards Johnson in terms of sharing his view that our society is decadent, riddled with serious problems and so on, without wishing to endorse either his explanation of why this is so, or his plan of action for the future. Oddly, one finds an intimation (that cannot really be gone into here) of what seems wrong in Johnson in the strictures of Oakeshott against Hayek, Hogg and others. It is simply an unease with the position that there are quite general solutions that are applicable here, as if we can ask the question "Why is civilization in decline and what can we do about it?" and expect an answer in the form of any sort of doctrine or principles. There may be no such answer, as opposed to what we can do about a particular problem.

This chapter has tried to examine some of the major themes in British Conservative thought and to emphasise both the abhorrence that Conservatives feel for 'abstraction' and 'dogma' and the importance they attach to tradition. Two caveats to avoid possible misunderstandings should be added here. Firstly, it would be too quick a move to turn the dislike of dogma into a dogma itself (cf the argument "Your doctrine is that there are no doctrines"). A systematic expression need not be dogmatic. Secondly, it is necessary to distinguish between theoretical and practical objections. For example, a Conservative might agree that without the consent of the government, stable government is a practical impossibility

(hence Trade Unions must be accommodated within the political system irrespective of rhetoric surrounding 'individual freedom') but still disagree with a Liberal that consent by the governed is necessary to give legitimacy to a particular government.

Further, I have suggested, as with Liberalism and Marxism, the past is integrated into this view of Man as a political agent such that it is part of a Conservative view of the world, rather than part of the world seen in a Conservative way. Conservatives, more so than other ideologists, have tended to distinguish between the proper study of history and the practical use of the past. This does not mean that they have eschewed this latter course themselves. From Burke onwards, through to Hailsham's paper reflections, Conservatives have looked to the past for inspiration and enlightenment. But what they have drawn from it has been neither a vision of the future, nor a series of instructions; rather they have seen it as providing a warning to those who are too optimistic about human nature. If, as Conservatives believe, man is a fallen and imperfect creature, who cannot be systematically improved by education, greater wealth, or any of the solutions of ideological rivals, then the past may be said to confirm those gloomy thoughts. The past shows it is Man, not his environment, that is to blame. But, of course, this fact does not lead to support for any particular programme that Conservatives, as opposed to Liberals or Marxists may advance. The past is, in this sense, politically redundant unless we already see it through Conservative eyes, in which case, though it may confirm our beliefs, it is unlikely to provide similar enlightenment to our opponents.

CHAPTER SIX

The ~~last~~ three chapters have attempted to look at the role of the past in particular ideologies and to locate that role within the overall context of Liberal, Marxist and Conservative thought. The past is not something added to Liberalism but something that runs through it. The past is seen as distinct from history here and its importance is conceived in strengthening ideological commitment and certainty. But if the ideological understanding of the past is distinct from an academic understanding (and not necessarily a failed academic understanding either) then how is it related to other examples of practical discourse and other practical uses of the past ?

One such use that I now propose to examine is the relationship between ideology and Christianity. I do so, partly because many people have suggested that they are identical in form (if not content) and there are, therefore, philosophical issues at stake here; but also because it helps provide (from the non-academic discipline side) another light which will help throw ideology into sharper relief as an object of study. Some critics may suggest that the discussion of ideology and religion together is highly appropriate since they are both dubious if not vacuous enterprises. God is dead and ideology has replaced religion as the secular illusion of the secular society. As Hobbes saw the ghost of the Roman Empire in the Roman Catholic Church, there are those who see in Marxism, nationalism and fascism the ghost of Christian religion in secular guise. For them, religion and ideology are lumped together, in the sense that both are seen as false doctrines or inadequate guides to action to be contrasted with 'a voice that, with impartial logic flays them all'.¹ They agree with Professor

¹ P Corbett, Ideologies (Hutchinson, London, 1965), p 58.

Raphael that an ideology may be taken to be 'a prescriptive doctrine that is not supported by rational argument'.²

In contrast most of those called ideologists and those who claim to be religious have been concerned to keep their beliefs apart; not least because they see their convictions as rivals for allegiance. Christians have wanted to emphasise the gulf between the sacred and the secular - the City of God is not seen to be the earthly city with better sewage disposal. Marxists and liberals have wanted to contrast what they see as religion with what they take to be philosophy and how much common ground there is between religion and Marxism or liberalism (the best known case being the Christian-Marxist dialogue), but the majority of adherents on either side remain unconvinced as to the suitability of a merger. Of the small group of Christian-Marxists who see themselves as a bridge between both sides, it has been unkindly remarked that there is a limited use for a bridge that touches neither side of the river. For the most part, Marxists, as Francis Barker put it in a recent issue of New Blackfriars,³ believe that because Christianity is an ideology it will be incompatible at a theoretical level with Marxist 'science'. Compared with Marxist 'knowledge', Christianity offers groundless confidence for action in the world. Liberals often conclude that religion, with its emphasis on authority, be it that of the Bible or the Pope, is repellent to reason and to the 'autonomous man'.⁴ In this chapter I shall critically examine what, broadly speaking, are the claims of those who recognise no formal distinctions between ideology and Christianity and those who categorically reject their conflation.

² D Raphael, Problems of Political Philosophy (Macmillan, London, 1970), p 17. It is not entirely clear whether he means that ideologies are non-rational or irrational. I suspect the latter.

³ Francis Barker, 'The morality of knowledge and the disappearance of God', New Blackfriars, September 1976, pp 403-15. Marxists believe that all religions are ideological, I shall only be concerned with Christianity in this chapter.

⁴ Not all liberals are anti-theological, T H Green and Locke for example.

The first claim, that ideology and religion are distinct, is sometimes expressed as follows: whilst ideology is about man, and the here and now, religion is about God and the hereafter. It is, however, clear that in religious thought God is not absent from his creation. The study of Old Testament prophets such as Amos, Micah and Isaiah,⁵ and the Last Judgement as related by St Matthew,⁶ should be enough to show that human actions and relationships are not to be understood as being independent of religious faith, but rather as the occasion or context for an expression of that faith. To say that the Christian attitude to life is 'otherworldly', or 'spiritual', is not to conjure up a mysterious parallel world in which the Christian may claim to partake, but to talk about the standards used in judging this world. The 'spiritual' is not, pace A N Whitehead, what is left over when material things are removed. Such a view would run the risk for the Christian of making God's commandments remote from his creation. Fortunately for them the prophets and evangelists make clear the kind of relationship that exists within the Judeo-Christian tradition between the love of God and the love of the neighbour. The latter, as St John points out, is not an optional extra which is chosen apart from the former, but the principal way in which the former is shown. Furthermore, as Kierkegaard tells us, love of the neighbour is not like love for another person that could legitimately fade away or ~~even~~ cease. The neighbour is always present and the necessity of Christian love of his or her is permanent by virtue of the existence of the Creation. Although for the Christian the religious

⁵ Amos 2: 6-7; Micah 6: 8; Isaiah 1: 11-18.

⁶ Matthew 25: 21-6.

and the practical are distinct in experience, they are both ever-present in it. They are also both aspects of the public world on which it is possible to make objective judgements.

The Covenants of both the Old and New Testament are made, not with an individual, but with a people. The events that befall an individual, such as the conversion of St Paul, or the misfortunes of Job, are only intelligible within the context of the religious community and tradition of which they form a part. The concept of religious community is not something incidental to religion, but the context in which religious notions of truth and falsity are understood. What I am trying to combat here is the tendency, inherent in the dichotomy between God and the world, to make the latter public, and the former private. To speak of prayer, or our relationship with God, as private is not to place it outside discussion, but to suggest that it does not invite secular government. Prayer is discussable in the context of the religious tradition to which it belongs. To claim otherwise is to skate close to the troubles encountered by Schleiermacher in making religious claims self-authenticating.⁷

Now the failure of the first claim does not establish that religion and ideology are identical. My point, however, is that they can both be said to play a similar role in a person's life. That is to say, for some, as

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SSchleiermacher held that there was a specific, identifiable, religious experience, correctly apprehended by the believer and misconceived by the atheist. This buys exemption from the atheists' criticisms (as I, and only I can know the quality of this experience); but if the experience is private in this Cartesian sense, it is difficult to see how the atheist can be accused of unfairly rejecting claims made for it. If it is not private, Schleiermacher ought to admit the possibility of something other than this inner feeling being used to test whether or not it is a sign of the divine, and this must apply to his own inner feelings.

the Christian sees the Resurrection as saving humanity from the power of sin, if only man will accept the gift of God's grace, revealed in the life and person of Jesus, so the Marxist may see the proletarian revolution as freeing mankind from capitalist exploitation, when the proletariat of the world unites. And, to extend the parallel one stage further, as the kingdom of God inaugurates 'authentic' human relationships (in the sense that they are no longer necessarily corrupted by sin and death), so the proletarian revolution ends 'pre-history' and becomes the starting point (not the culmination) of 'authentic' human history (in the sense of making it possible that human relationships be for the first time, uncorrupted by exploitation).

Of course an ideologist may well agree with what has just been stated and still claim that ideology and religion are distinct. As I said earlier, the Marxist conceived that religion are distinct. As I said earlier, the Marxist conceives that religion is 'ideological' in the sense of being both a false and a biased view of the world, but that Marxism is not ideological, because the form of its claims is comparable to those of science. Marxism, it is claimed, can not only be shown to be capable of distinguishing true from false propositions about the world, it can explain why people such as Christians hold to false ones. For Marxists Christianity is not simply a false doctrine, it is an example of 'false consciousness' or wishful thinking. It is interesting in this context to note the similarity in the arguments offered against religion by Marx, Feuerbach and Freud. Indeed, Marx's own atheism seems to have been derived largely from Feuerbach, who saw religion as the 'dream of the human mind' telling us (in a pejorative sense) about the believer and not about God. This was the result of applying Feuerbach's transformative method to, for example, St John's claim that 'God is love',

revealing that this really means 'Love is God', and so on. Marx extended this to cover material relationships, making Hegel's 'Man is the master of his property' reveal 'Property is the master of man'. However, whether religion is seen as neurosis on a grand scale, or the symptom of mankind's alienated essence, it still needs to be shown that it is false and irrational. This the argument does not try to do; for it assumes that religion is false, and therefore to be in need of explanation as a phenomenon, in the same way that we look for an explanation of X's paranoia when we have established that his claim 'everyone is against me' is false. In short, it attempts to explain mistaken beliefs without showing us why they are mistaken.⁸

Without such a previously established sceptical conclusion it is easy to see that this devaluation of religious belief loses its force in the argument. That is to say, if we wish to say that religious beliefs are nothing but neurotic hankerings after the security of a father figure, or the product of certain material conditions, then we are open to the rejoinder that our own anti-religious beliefs are nothing but childish rebellion against our human father, or the product of material conditions. Reductionism of this sort neatly undercuts itself, since religion and atheism do not come out as the irrational and the rational, but equally as products of the psyche or society. This is not to deny that some religious people are neurotic, or that people may turn to religion out of a sense of personal inadequacy. I am merely claiming that it is illegitimate to move from this fact to the claim that religion itself is a neurosis or a crutch for emotional cripples. This simply

⁸ Marx may not have been bothered about 'proving' the falsity of religion as he thought that this would have been as irrelevant as giving a drug addict lectures on the harm of drug-taking. Religion would not disappear through argument, but only when certain social conditions had been removed.

does not follow. To reach such a conclusion requires that neurosis be contrasted successfully with normal behaviour. On the face of it, many religious believers are completely normal, and more important, the most direct way by which we can identify a religious neurotic is by contrasting his or her behaviour with that of a normal religious believer. This being so, the criteria we must use to designate X as a religious neurotic must be those of authentic religious behaviour, and it follows from this that such a judgement must presuppose religious criteria and cannot stand in judgement on them. Another difficulty is that for both Freud and Marx nothing whatsoever can count as a falsifying example. In their description, whatever religious believers do they still offer mere rationalisations for doing it. Now, as we have noted, it is usual for correctly calling a given reason a rationalisation to rely upon the existence of appropriate criteria, but there is an important feature of the notion of deception, namely, the possibility of the person who is deceived being able to recognise it, that casts doubt on the rationalisation, thesis altogether in the work of Marx and Freud. Lear, for example, as we saw in Chapter 3, eventually sees Goneril and Regan in their true light. But this is not open to those who suffer from 'false consciousness' or a neurosis; for Lear's recognition of what has gone before, though it changes his perspective on matters is still intelligible within the one framework. What Lear believed could have been true, and it is only the tension that exists between what Lear believes Goneril and Regan to be, and their actions (which indicate the opposite), that brings us to say that he is deceived. These features are, however, absent from the situation in which the Marxist or Freudian wishes to call religion an illusion. Here the beliefs cannot be the right ones. Their class or childhood experience prevents their recognising this.

Another way of bringing out the error involved in thinking that we can explain religious away by giving an account of the genesis of religious belief is to consider a distinction we can make between reasons as grounds and reasons as motives. I may, for example, assert that the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066. My grounds for asserting this consist of the relevant historical evidence that we have at our disposal. These are independent of my will and that of anyone else. On the other hand, I may refrain from correcting someone who claims otherwise, my motives being that of fear stemming from my knowledge of his violent temper. This response is independent of the standard of truth involved in the first case, and leaves the truth-value of the statement untouched. The two cases are such that they cannot be reduced to each other. There is a logical gap between them. We can have reasons of either sort, but a ground cannot be a motive and vice versa. We have grounds for claims and motives for actions. Jealousy may be my motive for killing X, but it cannot be evidence for it; the detective's photographs may be his grounds for suspecting my guilt, but a knowledge of my motives is not. Thus the location of the motives of a religious believer could not affect the truth or falsity of his or her grounds for faith. It should also be added at this point that such arguments will be valid against any such accounts of ideology as well. That is, those theories that attempt to see them as forms of wish-fulfillment or the externalisation of internal disorders.⁹

The ideologist may still not be convinced by this. In particular the claim may be made that we are indeed looking for grounds, rather than attempting

⁹ For example, Robert Tucker's account of Marxism in R Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea (Allen & Unwin, London, 1970).

to locate motive, and that the truth of the ideologist's prescriptions is demonstrable by an appeal to history, science, or philosophy. Thus the certainty of academic disciplines (if there is indeed such a thing) is contrasted with the lack (and in some cases, Karl Barth for example, the positive disavowal) of any foundation for religion in this sense.¹⁰

However, it is not clear that religious faith is compatible with the kind of certainty we expect of science or philosophy. Given certainty, what, as Kierkegaard asked, becomes of the possibility of faith? We can admit that there is a distinction to be made between the natures of knowledge and of faith, but the distinction is not one between that which is rational and that which is irrational. It is a formal difference, not a difference that depends upon an evaluation.

Another claim made, amongst others, by Patrick Corbett¹¹ and Alasdair MacIntyre,¹² is that Christianity is itself an ideology. Corbett, for example, takes 'the Marxist', 'the Catholic' and 'the (American) Democrat' as his main examples of ideological belief (although he claims that there are hundreds, if not thousands of other examples, including Chandism, nazism, the divine right of kings and myths about the English public school!). There are two points that can be made about this characterisation. The first is the systematic unfairness of it all. His account of Catholicism ranges at points between a parody and a travesty. He writes:

His the Catholic's contempt for fact is so glaring as to need no comment. His fundamental contention is that the ills of the world ... can only be cured by the acceptance of certain truths ... under the guidance of the Church. Now if this were true

¹⁰ When asked to sum up the four volumes of 'Church Dogmatics', Barth replied 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so'.

¹¹ Patrick Corbett, Ideologies, op cit.

¹² Alasdair MacIntyre, op cit, ASIA.

there should plainly be some correlation between the power of the Church and the peacefulness of life ... but as everyone knows, the truth is exactly the reverse.

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This 'must be seen by anyone who looks without prejudice at the world around him', though 'looking at the world without prejudice is not the Catholic's aim ... he is prepared to spin the facts around in any way that suits his purpose'.¹⁴ I cannot actually think of any Catholic theologian who believes that the ills of the world can be cured in the way that Corbett describes, nor anyone who thinks that the truth of Catholicism is shown or measured by the correlation Corbett suggests. It is, of course, the duty of the church to bring people to God, and to uphold certain Christian values, but even so the ills of humanity could not be cured by the church, since these ills are a condition of sin which must always be present by virtue of the nature and existence of the Creation.

The second point is that Corbett sees ideological statements as being 'designed' to condition men socially. It is not the 'ordinary man' who gains by them, but the crafty ideologist and his masters. Thus the ideologist's motives are as suspect as his logic. But Corbett has misunderstood the kind of relationship that exists between the ideologist's aims and his beliefs. Corbett sees the Catholic or Marxist as believing certain things in order to gain power. He accuses them of believing because they want something. It does not occur to him that they want certain things because they believe. The point is that the Catholic may be fully aware of all the things that may happen to someone who does not

¹³ Op cit 117-18.

¹⁴ Op cit 118.

have a therapeutic abortion, but still be unable to sanction such an operation because the outcome (the loss of the unborn child) cannot be seen as a good thing whatever else happens. 'The facts' do not refute what the Catholic believes since it is what the Catholic believes that determines the moral significance of the facts. Corbett is right to suggest that there are no ultimate grounds on which the Catholic or Marxist may demonstrate the objective nature of his beliefs (the same, incidentally, being true of his own beliefs), but it does not follow from this that they are strictly comparable.

The similar claim to that made by Corbett advanced by MacIntyre is that Christianity is an ideology, but one that has drained itself of any empirical content.¹⁵ The replacements offered by an increasingly secular, and it seems, neurotic society - on the one hand Marxism, on the other psycho-analysis - have failed to fill the gap left by belief in God and we are left to search for a more satisfactory ideological replacement.

MacIntyre writes:

Against those who still believe that some particular ideology is still able to provide the light that our social and individual lives need, I shall assert that - in the case of Christianity, of Psychoanalysis and above all, of Marxism - either intellectual failure, or failure to express the forms of thought and action which constitute our contemporary social life, or both, have led to their necessary and in the long run not to be regretted decay.

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Now, as Henry Drucker has pointed out,¹⁷ it is difficult to see the way in which psychoanalysis is an ideology in the way that Marxism, nationalism and liberalism are. Certainly in terms of vocal manifestations in the

¹⁵ See also The Religious Significance of Atheism (written with Paul Ricoeur).

¹⁶ ASIA, p viii.

¹⁷ Henry Drucker, The Political Uses of Ideology, 97-8.

political arena there is no parallel to be drawn. If we wish to call psychoanalysis ideological, it would certainly have to be distinguished from those ideologies named above.

However, more needs to be said about MacIntyre's claim than this. It is clear from MacIntyre's comment that he thinks that Marxism and Christianity are similar (in the logic of the discourse that they employ) and that Christianity has now been replaced by Marxism as a more recent if not more advanced form of ideological commitment. In order to establish this claim, he has to show that they are related by something more than historical contingency.

It might be claimed that mankind has progressed from primitive myths and magic to religion, replacing notions of gods that are in trees or animals with that of a God who does not inhabit in person the world he created, and that the next stage in this development is the abandonment of religion for a yet more sophisticated view, namely, ideology.¹⁸ But the theological writings of Aquinas or Augustine, whatever failings they do have, are as accomplished as Mill's or Marx's contribution to their respective traditions. Indeed, when compared to Aquinas, the writings of national socialism and fascism in particular (two ideologies peculiar to the twentieth century) seem unsophisticated in MacIntyre's terms. His view only makes sense if we have a one-dimensional picture of human understanding; the sort of perspective that sees the parting of the Red Sea as the precursor of the Hoover Dam, or a magical rite as an attempt to perform a scientific experiment. It is this kind of assumption that permeates the anthropological

¹⁸ cf. Comte's idea of progression from theology to science via metaphysics.

writings of Sir James Frazer, and is powerfully exposed by Wittgenstein in some remarks on Frazer's The Golden Bough.¹⁹ In particular, Wittgenstein notes that the people Frazer describes already understood causal connections; magical rites were an expression of something important, not the deployment of a causal hypothesis.²⁰ Why, for example, should they pray for rain at the start of the rainy season? Surely, if prayers were thought to have a mysterious causal efficacy, it would be sensible to pray at the start of the dry season! In this context it is worth recalling G K Chesterton's remark when told that the presence of food and wine in an Egyptian tomb 'proved' that the Egyptians must have believed that the dead were capable of eating and drinking; he said that this conclusion no more followed from the evidence than the fact that Christians put flowers on a grave 'proved' that they must believe that the dead can both see and smell!

Before going on to look at the parallels that might be drawn between religion and ideology it is as well to draw a distinction between theology and the philosophy of religion. This is not easy; as D Z Phillips points out, it is rather like working on the Tower of Babel with the added disadvantage of there being no convenient agreement as to the object of the project.²¹ Nevertheless, some general remarks can be made. Theology is the systematic attempt by which the believer shows, as Aquinas put it, 'God in His Godhead'. The theologian does this in a variety of ways, by examining the scriptural conception of

¹⁹ L Wittgenstein, 'Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough, The Human World, May 1971, 95.

²⁰ This is not to say that they can never be mistaken in this way, but that they need not be so.

²¹ D Z Phillips, The Concept of Prayer (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965), 1.

God, by examining what the Councils of the Church have said, or by asking questions such as 'can the number six be the Creator?'. The important thing to note is the relationship between theology and faith. St Anselm, for example, described his work as that of 'faith seeking understanding', and of himself as 'believing that I might understand'. Faith here is an inner demand of theology. That is, theology may be separate from the other facets of religion, but not from religion itself. It is not, in this sense, separate from the beliefs that it expresses; for it is not a ground for belief, it is a systematic, doctrinal, expression of that belief, in the way that public worship is the liturgical expression of that belief. The theologian must always be within a religious tradition. Contrary then, to the assertion made at the start of Chapter 2 of Honest to God²² by John Robinson, traditional theology is not based on the five proofs of God's existence offered by Aquinas, but on faith in God's word as revealed in scripture. It is worth noting in this context that the Summa Theologia does not start with or from (in the sense of being based upon) the Five Ways at all.²³ Secondly, though we may examine (and find wanting) the arguments put forward by Aquinas for their philosophical coherence as proofs, it is not clear that they were intended as such. Who were the thirteenth-century ~~atheists~~ to whom Aquinas could have been addressing himself?

~~Having said all this,~~ it ought to be clear, on the one hand, that the theologian is not an impartial judge between the claims advanced by two churches or within different religious traditions, but a man committed to

²² J A T Robinson, Honest to God (Westminster, London 1963), 29.

²³ Question 1 is entitled 'On what sort of teaching Christian theology is and what it covers'.

a religious stance. The philosopher of religion is, on the other hand, concerned with the logic of religious statements, not, qua philosopher, choosing between them. The philosophy of religion is not faith seeking understanding; it is concerned with what is involved in belief, rather than expressing it. In this sense the philosopher sees the philosophical relevance of certain concepts, but not their religious significance (which is not the same as their significance for religion): for in one sense, to understand the religious point of a doctrine is to believe in it. Or, to put it the other way around, to believe in a doctrine is to ~~see~~ the religious point of it.²⁴ If the above characterisation is correct it is clear that the difference between Christianity and Marxism (to keep to MacIntyre's example) cannot be expressed merely by enumerating a series of propositions that one assents to and the other does not. To do so would be to place faith on top, rather than at the heart, of the theologian's task. It would reduce faith to an intellectual extra that could be added on to the end of the liberal or Marxist account of religious experience.

If the foregoing discussion has established the relationship between theology and religion, we are now in a position to draw the correct distinction between ideology and religion that was hinted at earlier in noting the attempt of ideologists to ground their beliefs in what is claimed to be social science or social philosophy. The Christian does not attempt to ground his belief in the theology ~~let~~ alone in a secular discipline like philosophy or science. On the contrary, it is those very

²⁴ This should not be confused with the claim that belief is necessary for understanding tout court. A person may understand what is involved in the doctrine of the Trinity and reject it. My claim is that seeing the point of an activity is not the same as knowing what constitutes a valid move within it or defending it against objections.

beliefs that make theology possible. To labour the point, theology does not stand below or outside of belief (whatever your metaphorical preference) as a foundation based on 'the facts'; it is itself another way of expressing those beliefs. If the relationship, for example, between Marxism and history were of the same type as that between theology and religion, it would produce for the Marxist the extremely unsatisfactory spectacle of Marxism appealing for verification to a version of itself: the claims of the ideologist and theologian are, I suggest, different. Now we can, of course, argue with MacIntyre that both claims are mistaken and in the end vacuous. But it is important to see that, even if this were so, the mistakes of the ideologist and of the religious believer are of a different order. The desire to organise the state in accordance with the laws of God may produce disastrous results, as the Anabaptists found out, but though such a society might be strange and unpleasant, it could only be unstable, not an impossibility. Again appealing to the Bible might not demonstrate that only theocratic government is legitimate, but it is not the same kind of mistake as trying to base the political structure of a society on the discoveries of natural science. The appeal to a religious authority may prove contingently unacceptable, but it will not be incoherent as an appeal to science must invariably prove to be. Even if it is accepted that the forms of an ideological and of a religious work are different, it might still be claimed that the content or practical achievement is the same, or amounts to the same thing. By content or practical achievement I do not mean a series of propositions that are affirmed by either or both, or even their respective ontologies, but something more akin to the fact that religion and ideology both offer a 'world view'. One similarity that can be noted in the radical discontinuity

that exists between our previous standards and those we now adopt when we become religious believers or adherents of an ideology. The world then becomes, in an important sense, a different place and we characterise such a metanoia in terms such as 'dying to the world', 'being reborn', or recognising 'alienation' and escaping 'false consciousness'. In saying this the believer and adherent are not claiming to have more information about the world than they did before, but that they see it as it 'really is'. That is, they claim to see the real significance of events; to have gone beyond mere appearances. This is connected with the fact that, in adopting a religious or ideological standpoint, the individual is rescued from insignificance and placed at the centre of the stage. No one is insignificant in the sight of God, and each 'proletarian' has a part to play in securing the success of the 'revolution'. And, as in a Shakespearian tragedy, nothing, when seen from the total scheme of things, is irrelevant or insignificant. A person may hold to moral standards and yet still say that 'life has no meaning' or 'life is a mystery', but the believer and adherent are committed to saying that life is meaningful, and that through salvation, class struggle, or national self-determination, the value and intelligibility of their life is revealed. For the man of conviction there is a point to life the significance of which is not immediately given in experience. This significance will, of course, be different, depending on the faith or ideology embraced. What the Marxist sees as a symptom of the class structure of society may appear to the liberal or conservative as evidence that the rule of law is being upheld against the claims of sectional interests. The point is that both the believer and the adherent see all events as peculiarly significant within their respective frameworks. Nothing is excluded.

But to say that Christians, Marxists, liberals and nationalists all find events significant within a certain framework will not get us very far, unless we can look at the kind of significance involved. One way of trying to bring out the parallel it is claimed exists between them is to look at the way that holding a 'world-view' helps a person to work towards a goal. In the case of the Christian this can be put roughly as follows. The kingdom of God is not (only) the final stage of history, but the trajectory of history. The fact that the kingdom will come, or rather the fact that the kingdom has been established, though not fulfilled, enables us to work towards salvation. This is to say that the kingdom of God is not just the top note of the ascending musical scale of history, but the trajectory of history. In a similar way, it is the belief in the certainty of the 'proletarian revolution' that provides, for the Marxist, the significance of history, and enables him to see himself as advancing a cause. It was the 'correct' attitude taken by the Bolshevik faction to the 'bourgeois revolution' in Russia (that is, of seeing it as the prelude to, and midwife of, the 'proletarian revolution'), which could be seen to justify their tolerance of liberals, whilst perceiving in this convenience the deeper dimension necessary for their eventual 'success'. But we should not, like Corbett, get carried away with similarities that exist only on the surface. For the Christian, the post-Resurrection world^{so} the eschatological perspective is one in which the certainty of the kingdom is assured. Even if the world were to end tomorrow, then this would not negate what the Christian sees as the victory of Christ over sin and death, since the event that assures this victory has been revealed to him through his faith and is guaranteed by it. It cannot be reversed by a future event. There is, it must be admitted, a serious disagreement over the kind of event the Resurrection was, and whether or

not claims about its occurrence are potentially falsifiable by historical evidence. On one side of the dispute is the unlikely, if not unholy, alliance between Catholic natural theologians and sceptics, such as Antony Flew, who insist that it is on a factual level, on a logical par with other historical events. On the other side are modern Protestant theologians, led by Barth and Bultmann, who put it safely outside the bounds of historical investigation.²⁵ The kind of invulnerability they claim has led to charges of vacuity, reductionism and inconsistency.²⁶ But such a controversy cannot, I think, alter the contention that to be a Christian is to believe in the occurrence of the Resurrection, and in the Christian faith its occurrence cannot be challenged. However, it is clearly not the case that believing in Marxism similarly guarantees the occurrence of the 'revolution'. As a temporal event the 'revolution' is a possibility, but not a certainty. Marxism cannot preclude the possibility of nuclear energy destroying the world.

I do not wish to deny here that the place of the past in Christianity is a complex issue with many writers taking different sides. Ever since the process of 'demythologizing' the bible was started in the 18th century by Protestant scholars, there has been less emphasis on the bible as history and more emphasis on the symbolism involved. Thus the prevalent view that the New Testament is an attempt to make sense of Jesus' life and claims to Messiahship within various intellectual traditions (Greek,

²⁵ Bultmann puts the point as follows: 'It is precisely its immunity from proof which secures the Christian proclamation against the charge of being mythological.' Kerygma and Myth, A Theological Debate, rev. and trans. R H Fuller (Harper & Row, New York, 1961), 44.

²⁶ See A MacIntyre 'The religious significance of atheism' and 'God and the theologians' (reprinted in ASIA).f For some interesting and pertinent criticisms of Bultmann, see R W Hepburn 'Demythologizing' and the problems of validity', in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed A G N Flew and A MacIntyre (Macmillan, London, 1964).

Jewish, Gnostic, etc.) rather than a record of actual events. But for every follower of Bultmann who wishes to deny the literal occurrence of miracles and to suggest that even the Resurrection does not involve any commitment to the physical revival of Jesus' body there is a Hugo Meynell²⁷ who holds that not only are miracles signs or symbols of Jesus' power but evidence for it.

Whatever one thinks of these rival claims I could suggest that they do not involve history in any sense that we would normally use. It is clear that the significance of the events goes beyond the actual events themselves because they are set in a theleological context (and the parallel with the teleological element in Marxism is strong here) in a way that for assessment of the history of Spain or England does not. Furthermore, though we may see miracle X as an event, it is difficult to know where the concept of evidence could apply here. What evidence would we require to show that a miracle occurred, as opposed to evidence for the battle of Hastings having taken place?

Earlier, it was noted that 'authentic' human relationships were inaugurated by the advent of the kingdom of God for the Christian and will be by the coming of the 'revolution' for the Marxist. Again, it is worth examining what is involved in these concepts of authenticity, and seeing if there are any significant disparities. One which comes to mind is that for the Marxist (or, indeed, any ideologist) authentic human history is still history. It is still within the bounds of time in which it is possible that men perform actions, catch colds and die. For the Christian, this

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H Meinell, God and the World (London, SPCK, 1971).

is not so; for whatever we are to make of the notion of eternal life, it cannot be a temporal duration. Our salvation is not an event. It is outside time, and without all that occurs in time. To say that there will be no colds or deaths in heaven is to make a grammatical remark, and not to comment on the superiority of preventive medicine there.

This brings us to the notion of the eternal, and its importance in religious life. It is a difficult notion, especially when connected to questions about survival after death, and I do not want to comment on the complex issues involved. I shall only consider the relationship between the eternal and temporal and try to make clear their incompatibility. There is a danger of looking on the after-life as being like the last reel of a Western movie - that is, the time following the time of reckoning when the divine sheriff gives to everyone their just deserts. If we thus look on eternity as a period to be added on to the end of history this must preclude our making the essential distinction we have to make in order to grasp the point made by D Z Phillips in advancing the following two quotations.²⁸ The first is from Antony Flew, the second from Wittgenstein.

Flew says:

And if this future life is supposed to last forever, then the question of whether or not it is fictitious ... is of overwhelming importance. For what are three score years and ten compared with all eternity?

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Here eternity is seen as more time. What Phillips wants to stress is the qualitative difference the use of the term eternal makes, hence the following passage from the Tractatus:

²⁸ D Z Phillips, Death and Immortality (Macmillan, London, 1970), 48-9.

²⁹ A G N Flew, op cit.

Not only is there no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, of its eternal survival after death; but in any case the assumption fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving for ever? Is not this eternal life as much of a riddle as our present life? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time.

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The point Phillips is making is that to ask 'how long does eternity last?' is as pointless as asking 'where do parallel lines meet?' or 'what is the largest number in an infinite series?'.

Seeing the grammatical distinction between eternity and temporality helps us to draw one final distinction in this era. It is related to the earlier discussion of the past and future. The Marxist may see the General Strike of 1926 as a defeat for the working class movement in Britain, a defeat that will be reversed by future events. The working class may receive setbacks but in the end it will be victorious. For the Christian, on the other hand, the Crucifixion cannot be understood in this way. It was not a defeat that will be overcome at a later date, or even a defeat that will come to be seen as essential to the final victory. Seen from the standpoint of the eternal, it always is a victory. As Kierkegaard puts it:

nothing in the world has even been so completely lost as was Christianity at the time that Christ was crucified ... never in the world had anyone accomplished so little by the sacrifice of a consecrated life as did Jesus Christ. And yet in this same instant, eternally understood, He had accomplished all ... Was it not said by many intelligent men and women, 'The result shows that He has been hunting after phantasies; He should have married. In this way He would now be a distinguished teacher in Israel.'

³⁰ L Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961), 6.4312.

And yet, eternally understood, the crucified one had in the same moment accomplished all! But the view of the moment and the view of eternity ... have never stood in such atrocious opposition. It can never be repeated. This could only happen to Him. Yet eternally understood, He had in the same moment accomplished all and on that account, said, with eternity's wisdom 'It is finished'.

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So far I have tried to show that there are important differences between both the form and content of religious and ideological claims. In particular, that theology is not a ground for Christianity, as history of science are claimed to be a ground for Marxism, and that the eternal (as understood by Christians) is a category that has no equivalent in ideological writings. I want to conclude by making some remarks about religious practices and ideologically inspired activities.

When we consider religious practices, there are important differences even within Christianity. The mass, with its attendant notions of sacrament and priesthood, is a central feature of Roman Catholicism and yet it is regarded by extreme Protestant sects as 'a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit'. The notions of sacrament and priesthood are not to be found in the religious talk of the Pentecostal sects and the Quakers. Are, then, the differences between Christian sects greater than, or of a different order from the differences between religious and 'ideological' practices? It might be argued, for example, that the 'Internationale' and 'Deutschland uber alles' are the equivalent of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' or 'Full in the Painting Heart of Rome'; that 'A letter Concerning Toleration' is similar to a Papal Encyclical, and that the devotion shown by Catholics to St Francis is echoed by that shown by the

³¹ S Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart, trans D V Steere (Harper, New York, 1956), 120-1.

Russians to Lenin and the Chinese to Mao. The monument to Mao is certainly as grand as that accorded to any Christian saint.

There are, of course, similarities, just as there are between revivalist meetings and football matches or rock concerts. Even so, it is important to see that calling Russian devotion to Lenin 'religious' is not to be taken literally, and that such usage is parasitic on authentic religious notions. In seeing the part a notion plays in a way of life, it is essential to put it into the appropriate context. The religion itself, where the notion of what is sacred and holy and the conception of God all determine the sense that prayer has for the believer, and the very possibility of praying. The context in which ideological activities and pronouncements take place is a different one, with different conceptions providing different possibilities. It is illegitimate to 'abstract' notions from the two contexts and say that they really amount to the same thing. It would be as absurd as equating a Saturday night dance in Pitscottie with an African ritual for choosing a wife on the grounds that there is music, dancing, possibly the use of hallucinatory substances, and that the end result is the same - people pair off into couples. Seen within their appropriate contexts, we can see that the concepts which give life to one are absent from the other. Thus it would be mistaken to equate prayers that are tied to the notion of an Eternal God with whatever regard the Chinese have for Mao when the notion of eternity has no place in Maoism. To this extent, there are no ideological equivalents and prayers and worship at all. In a similar way religious rituals and their expression are distinct from ideological rituals. Again, it would be no use arguing that the notions of the sacred and holy only make a difference of degree, for they are what make religious notions religious. In this sense they are internal to the religious notion of a ritual, and once this

is seen we should not make the mistake of equating religious and ideological practices on the grounds of external similarities.

Given the variety of religion and ideology, discussing them in this way may seem an ambitious project. It is not surprising that religion is construed as referring to Christianity, and mainstream Christianity at that. There may, be, of course, Christian sects that do not appear to be covered in the exposition given here. What can be intelligently said about them would then depend on the concepts they employ and the relationship these concepts would have to other Christian churches on one hand, and ideologies on the other. The matter could not be settled by an a priori definition of religious belief. Such matters are left alone, first because of ignorance of the minutiae of peripheral Christian groups and secondly because they are peripheral. It should be stressed here that the religious and theological attitudes outlined are examples of Christian thought, not archetypes.

None of the above should be taken to imply that religious people should not get involved in politics. The Reverend Dr Paisley is quite consistent to be an MP if somewhat repellant to his ecumenically minded colleagues, for other reasons.

Nor should the force of the parallels between Christianity and ideology be overlooked. My point has been to show both that they rest on different foundations and that there is no satisfactory ideological category that can do justice to both the concept of the eternal and the activity of worship. This emphasises the point I have been making all along about context. The fact that taken in abstraction the Marxist and Christian attitudes to the past seem similar in form dissolves when we place them against their respective backgrounds - or at the very least, loses its plausibility as a genuine comparison.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In the opening chapter of this thesis it was suggested that the author might be accused of allowing the question of truth, surely the central concern of anything worth calling philosophy, to slip by. I have tried, in one sense, to deflect this question, rather than meet it head on by suggesting that ideological thought is not like history, or philosophy - in as much as either of those disciplines attempt to give genuine theoretical knowledge about the world. In saying this I would want to distinguish my thesis from that of a Popper, a Corbett or a Raphael, who would want to suggest that ideological beliefs and doctrines are nothing but nests of intellectual confusion with potentially dangerous practical results if those who are misled by them seize power. And they are dangerous precisely because they fail to live up to the standards of science, history or philosophy. My argument is that even if this were so, within the arena of politics, ideological thought may be said to be a factor which may motivate or encourage people to act in a certain way and that we should not ~~dismiss~~ ideology but investigate precisely what is involved in it. The fact that ideology is not a discipline (in an Oakeshottian sense) need not imply that it is vacuous or irrelevant.

I have tried to carry this investigation out by approaching the subject from two opposite directions. Firstly, I have tried to look at the contrast between 'academic' disciplines and ideological thought and secondly, to look at the relationship between ideology and practical activities such as religion, where it might be thought that there are worthwhile parallels. But I want now to look in more detail at the question of disputes between ideologists - both those which take place

between members of the same ideological tradition and those which take place between rival ideological groups. The purpose in doing so is to look at how, if at all, such disputes might be settled and to see whether they are similar to disputes between scientists or historians on the one hand, and other practical activities such as religion (and morality) on the other. In this way the question of truth is raised for consideration, though, I hope, in a clearer context.

It cannot have escaped the attention of any student of politics that the disputes between, for example, Conservatives and Socialists are as interminable as they are ill tempered. Though there may be particular instances where one side or the other will admit defeat on a point of detail or over a matter of fact, there is no concession in the wider arena of principles and values. Moreover, disputes between various Marxist or Nationalist groupings are often characterised (to the outside observer at least) by many of the same features. Why, we may ask, should this be so? Is it because the stubbornness or plain irrationality of one side in the dispute, or is it because the very nature of the debates themselves precludes a satisfactory solution? I shall call those disputes between Liberals and Marxist or Conservatives and Nationalists 'external' disputes and those between members of the same ideological persuasion 'internal' disputes.

I

The most fertile source of 'internal' disputes is undoubtedly amongst those groups professing to be Marxists. The followers of Trotsky, Mao Tse Tung, Althusser, not to mention the 'orthodox' Communist Parties of both Eastern and Western Europe, all claim to be "true" Marxists, as opposed to their opponents who are 'revisionists', 'ultra-leftists' or 'adventurists'. Consider the following examples of such disputes.

At the beginning of the present century some Socialists, such as Bernstein, argued that certain of Marx's predictions had failed to come about because of changes within the structure of western capitalism that Marx had not foreseen. Socialists should, therefore, abandon such redundant ideas and replace them with an analysis that took the new situation into account. More recently, the late Anthony Crosland¹ argued that increasing economic prosperity had effectively defused the class struggle and that Marx's predictions of catastrophe were false. Against this it was argued (by Kautsky and Luxemburg among others) that the 'scientific' nature of Marxism means that in the end it would be vindicated by events and shown to be correct. Any setbacks would only be temporary, because capitalism cannot survive the internal contradictions it generates, no matter how many times it finds a way to overcome a particular crisis, whether by war or by economic imperialism.

Thus the modern Socialist critics of Crosland, argue that his thesis was only tenable at a time of economic growth and increasing prosperity because it would hide the fundamental question of how the capitalist cake was distributed behind the fact that the cake was increasing in size and everyone got more. But, so the critic argues, that was only a temporary respite from the economic crisis that is inevitable, and that class struggle will surface again sooner or later.

A second example is that of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent history of the Soviet state. Some Marxists have argued that whatever imperfections there are in the USSR, it is a socialist state? Marxist in economic

¹ C A R Crosland, The Future of Socialism (London: Cape, 1956).

policy and the first example of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in action. Others have argued that it is nothing of the sort, complaining that the Soviet rulers have departed from Marxism and set up a 'degenerated workers' state' or 'State Capitalism' instead. There are features of such debates that are worth mentioning here. Firstly, a great deal of attention is paid to specific texts, pre-eminent amongst which are the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. This does not mean that such texts are unambiguous, consistent and have settled interpretations that all the disputing parties are agreed upon. Rather it means that in some circumstances it is enough to refer to a statement of Marx (or Lenin) in order to end an argument and to decide upon one course of action rather than another. In other words, not only must an argument be convincing, it must be shown to be in accordance with 'Marxist principles'; that is to say, ~~show~~ foundation for it must be sought in the writings of accepted Marxist writers such as Marx, Engels and Lenin.

As we have already noted (see page⁵⁵) an example of this point is provided by the debate between Gunn and Hoffman over the question of Engels' position in the 'Dialectics of Nature'. It is not enough to assess the coherence of what Engels says, the authors feel impelled to show that those views are, or are not, 'Marxist'. But, though there may well be a wide range of interpretation over a particular Marxist text, there is a fairly broad agreement that only certain texts can count in this way. Thus, whilst it would be of importance to show that Marx or Lenin held opinion X, it would be absurd to cite the writings of Adolf Hitler or J S Mill.

Not anything, then, can count as a contribution to such a debate. The procedure is not an arbitrary one. This leads to the second feature of

such debates, the part played by the notion of authority, or an authority. As we noted above, to show that Marx or Lenin opposed a certain action can be enough to stop further argument. To go on would be as absurd as a Christian saying "I know that X is against the will of God, but I still don't see why I shouldn't do it". This is not to give Marx divine status, merely to point out that his works have the status of authorities for adherents of Marxism.

Theological debates provide a striking comparison. One thinks of St. Augustine's famous remark at the end of the Pelagian controversy "Roma locuta est, causa finita est".² Lest anyone think that such deference to authority is dead, a modern example shows the same point. In G Egner's book Birth Regulation and Catholic Belief³ the author examines (and finds wanting) the traditional arguments put forward by fellow Roman Catholics against contraception. However, he also accepts that there is a tradition in the Catholic Church against contraception, and the fact that such practices have been condemned by Popes, Saints and Councils of the Church, counts as an objection against his position. It need not be the end of the matter, for a tradition isn't everything. He might for example show that the tradition has been mis-interpreted by his opponents, or that it conflicts with a more fundamental area of Christian belief, and that it should therefore be abandoned. The point is that it is recognised as an objection that must be faced, in a way that the objection "But that's unscientific" would not. Now in much the same way a Marxist might feel able to say "Well, so much the worse for Marx

² "Rome has spoken, the debate is ended."

³ G Egner, Birth Regulation and Catholic Belief (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966).

if he believed Y", but he would have to admit that it was an objection that Marx disagreed. And if he found himself disagreeing with Marx a great deal then the end of his allegiance to Marxism would be near at hand.

Such a parallel should not be pressed too far. It might be suggested that the Bible is not a document that is self interpreting and that there was at one time a body recognised as the true interpreter of scripture - the Catholic Church. What happened at the Reformation was that the appeal to the Pope as a source of authority lost its force for some Christians; the authority of the Papacy being rejected in favour of the Bible alone. In such circumstances a prescription such as Augustine's loses its force to compel all those who are not Roman Catholics. A unity was thereby lost for Christendom. On the other hand, so the argument might run, the writings of Marx have been matters of dispute from the very start and there has never been a widely accepted authority in a position analogous to that of the Catholic Church.

This point becomes of some importance when we consider a possible objection to this characterisation of debates between Marxists. The objection is simply that it is pejorative to pretend that all debates between Marxists are over who are the real heirs to the true gospel of Marxist thought and never about empirical matters. Rosa Luxemburg, for example, was right about the facts and Bernstein was wrong; these disputes were, therefore, factual matters that could be settled in favour of one side or the other.

Now I have no wish to argue that matters of truth and falsity never arise in debates between Marxists. Someone might argue that event Y took place in 1066, another that it took place on 1067 or whatever and, of course, such a dispute could be settled upon production of the appropriate evidence. But this is not quite what I have in mind here.

What evidence would one produce to show that the Russian Revolution installed the dictatorship of the proletariat in that country ? The terms used here, 'revolution', 'proletarian dictatorship' and so on are not descriptive terms that are capable of verification (did it or didn't it happen ?) but evaluative terms that already provoke controversy. It is not as if all the disputing parties are agreed as to what would count as an example of X and are looking for one, they are disagreeing over the very examples themselves. Thus the Marxist who claims that the Soviet Union is 'State Capitalist' is not likely to be convinced of his error by a description of the events in the USSR since 1917, since the terms used by himself or his opponent already decide the question in advance of any evidence offered. There are no appropriate criteria for deciding between rival Marxist claims to the authenticity or otherwise of certain political actions. History cannot provide them because the description of the events offered by the historian has no place for either proletarian dictatorship or state capitalism - they are not explanatory hypotheses about the past since our description of the events in the Soviet Union would not be less complete or comprehensible if they were left out. In the same way that the historian's description of events since the birth of Jesus is not enhanced by referring to the advent of the Kingdom of God at that time. It makes no difference to how things were.

Nor can a closer study of Marxism illuminate what is the correct view to hold about the past, or the correct action to take in the future. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, there is no 'correct' version of Marxism that would command allegiance from all who look without the blinkers of prejudice. Any assessment of Marxism from within is bound to beg the question and any assessment from outside Marxism will only be able to note

that there are many differing Marxist groups who disagree, but who quote the same works in the support of their respective positions. There are, for example, no 'core' doctrines that all Marxists must hold (and in the same way) in order to be called Marxists - where would we find them without begging precisely those points at issue. To reject Engels or Stalin or even Lenin as 'un-Marxist' might tell a listener the kind of Marxist we are, but it will not illuminate the logic of Marxism. The absurdity of saying that Engels wasn't 'really' a Marxist could be paralleled by saying that the Pope isn't 'really' a Christian. If there is no 'essence' to Marxism, neither is there some kind of original set of beliefs that Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or Althusser can be shown to have diverged fundamentally from. The difficulty here can be brought out by asking the question "When did Marx become a Marxist"?⁴ Do we need to take all of Marx's works into account, should we abandon the earlier ones as Althusser suggests, or are the contributions of Engels and Lenin vital to Marxism? Clearly the various Marxist parties have their own answers to these questions, the point is that they cannot be settled by an appeal to something called 'the facts'.

Secondly, Marxism cannot specify in any detail those actions which count as moves towards 'a Marxist society' or are genuinely 'revolutionary' as opposed to 'counter-revolutionary'. Marxism is not a party manifesto with political objectives, though Marxist groups might have both. All a doctrine like Marxism can do is talk of creating a Socialist society, of ending 'exploitation' and 'alienation', it cannot tell us whether or not programme X will bring about that end, or whether Soviet citizens are 'unalienated'.

⁴ And to continue the parallel with Christianity, a similar difficulty can be raised by asking "When did Jesus become a Christian?"

Thus debates between Marxists as to whether the revolution of 1917 or 1948 in China were 'socialist' are not settled by appealing to the facts at all. They are in fact, not settled.

In debates between Marxists, then, we have seen that there are not conclusive criteria that can be brought to bear by either side, but that nevertheless there is a broad agreement as to the language used in such disputes, the range of concepts and judgements invoked. As we shall see later on, though Marxists might disagree over the conditions under which socialism can be said to flourish, they do agree that socialism is something to be fought for and that terms such as 'class', 'alienation' and 'exploitation' are the vocabulary of such a struggle. To use a phrase of Wittgenstein's, they bear a family resemblance to each other and their disputes, if we read them attentively, remind us just how much they have in common.

Of course, not all arguments between members of the same ideology or party are like this. Conservatives do not invoke Disraeli or Burke in quite the same way that Marxists invoke Lenin or Trotsky. The case of Liberalism shows more clearly just how far members of the same ideology can differ in terms of both intellectual grounds and practical recommendations. Locke, JSS Mill, T H Green and Herbert Spencer are all recognised as Liberals, yet they not only disagreed on how best to promote Liberal values, they disagreed as to what Liberal values were. As we saw in Chapter 4, Locke saw 'human rights' as the key, Mill appealed to 'utility', Green appealed to 'moral self-realisation' and Spencer seems to have believed in a biological (and therefore non-moral) view of politics. Now none of these is the 'real' Liberal, nor is Liberalism an amalgam of all these positions. Rather they are positions that have, at one time or another, seemed more or less compelling to those who called themselves Liberals.

Modern Liberals, for example, seem to favour the arguments that promote 'positive' liberty, rather than seeing liberty as the mere absence of restraint. Yet it is difficult to see what common grounds could be offered for deciding between the two views any more than Mill's appeal to utility could be said to refute Green's talk of self-realisation. I hope that none of this has given the impression of being too cut and dried. Plainly there are figures who have changed from one ideology to another and those who are on the borderline between competing ideologies. Different ideologies are not sealed compartments, incapable of change or adaptation.

Also, it should be noted again that the relationship between ideological adherence and a philosophical stance is often a complex one. There is no obvious relationship between philosophy and ideology. T H Green and Mill were both Liberals, yet nothing could have been further from Mill's conception of moral duty than that of Green. On the other hand, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen admitted that he found utilitarianism a sympathetic creed, though he remained a staunch Conservative.

II

Before turning to consider those disputes between members of opposing ideologies, it is necessary to say something about what is involved in the notion of settling an argument. Part of the difficulty I wish to raise is precisely what counts as a solution to a disagreement of this kind. At first glance it appears that different things will count as solutions, or, as K R Minogue puts it, Apartheid is a problem for blacks, but a solution for Afrikaners.⁵

⁵ K R Minogue, The Liberal Mind, (London: Methuen, 1963).

Clearly, part of calling an exchange of words an argument is the pre-supposition that there are common standards or criteria available to provide a framework as to what counts for or against an assertion. If the Professor is uncertain as to whether or not there are snakes in Iceland then he can go there, hire guides, peer at the ground through a strong magnifying glass and so on. Of course, there may be matters of fact that are at present unresolvable because we lack sufficiently sophisticated techniques or instruments. The point is that it is agreed what would count as a test of that assertion. In science, for example, two disputing scientists would be bound by the results of a properly conducted experiment.

The technique of 'looking and seeing' is not the paradigm for all arguments however. Questions of logic, whatever Lenin might have thought, are not empirical matters but are settled in advance of any evidence.⁶ As Wittgenstein argued there are a great many different kinds of argument with more, or less, developed criteria for deciding between competing positions. To realist this one only has to look at the differences between arguments in philosophy, history, aesthetics, mathematics, or theology; for finding a solution will depend upon using appropriate procedures and they may differ from case to case.

The question is then, "Are there appropriate criteria for settling ideological disputes" ? As we have already seen, arguments between members of the same ideology have appropriate arguments and authorities that can be advanced and recognised as contributing to the debate at hand. Equally, they are not always decisive; it is usually the case

⁶ Cf. L Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 5.552.

that defeat for one side in practical political terms is followed by the abandonment of their theoretical stance rather than vice versa. The victory of Stalin's view of Marxism over that of Trotsky in the Soviet Union is a good example of this.

If we look, not at the debate between the fellow Marxists, Stalin and Trotsky, but between Burke and Paine, it soon becomes apparent that not only do the two sides disagree as to the appropriate criteria for settling their quarrel, but that there are no such criteria. This is because their dispute is not so much about the course of the French Revolution but about the significance of such an event. Now this does not mean that there are no factual errors in either account, nor that such issues are not of legitimate interest to us. It is not, for example, easy to sympathise with Burke when he lambasts the character of the leading revolutionaries, only to contrast them with the noneetoo obvious virtues of the French Queen.⁷ It can be readily agreed that bias and error creep in; given that Paine admits that he has not even read Burke's work the whole way through, it is clear that we can at least cast doubt on his sense of academic detachment. The crucial point, however, comes when they both agree as to what happened, but offer completely different interpretations of it. Whereas Paine saw the significance of the revolution in bringing France from childhood to adulthood (by adopting 'reason'), Burke saw nothing regression into barbarism through the abandoning of tradition. In short, events become transformed when placed in their respective frameworks. Burke thought it a scandal

⁷ E Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, (Penguin, 1969) 169-70.

that the revolutionaries admitted Louis XVI was by no means a bad king and yet still rebel against him. Paine thought that this demonstrated a commendable desire to act, not out of personal hatred or passion, but out of principle. Again, Burke held that the executions, the reign of terror, the September massacres, all showed the kind of undesirable anarchists that were now at the helm of the state. Such men were unable even to uphold a minimum of law and order. Paine's reply was that these actions, terrible as they were could not be seen as the true spirit of the revolution, but of the pre-revolutionary sickness that had fostered under the repressive Bourbon state.⁸

To take a more modern example, a Marxist and a Nationalist might perfectly well agree that the First World War broke out in 1914, that British losses at the Somme were N thousand (or rather, they would agree over what kind of evidence could substantiate or refuse such claims). What they would disagree about is the significance that those facts have. They see the war in different ways, one as a conflict between classes, the other as a conflict between nations. In this case there is no appropriate procedure for deciding between the two, for each ideology provides the grounds for assessment. I have already noted that the famous statement 'All history is the history of class struggle' is not an empirical generalisation, but lays down a condition for understanding any historical event within Marxism. It provides a framework for understanding all historical events. There could be no more be an event that did not illustrate class struggle than there could be an unalienated

⁸ T Paine, The Rights of Man (Penguin, 1969), 71 & 81.

man within capitalism, or a married bachelor. 'All history is ...' stands in relation to past events in the same way that 'All events have a cause' stands in relation to those events investigated by science.⁹ By this I mean that since it provides the framework for the proper (in Marxist terms) understanding of that evidence. The situation is not, for example, analogous to two scientists discussing what would count as evidence for a particular hypothesis, where there must be things that would not count as evidence. For the Marxist anything and everything is evidence, nothing is irrelevant or excluded. Again, this has nothing to do with the case where the Marxist or his opponent may be proved to be correct over a particular matter of fact. An example of the relationship between a matter of fact and ideological commitment would be of the Scottish Nationalist who says "I am a Scottish Nationalist because I believe that if Scotland becomes independent it will be more prosperous in economic terms than would otherwise be the case". Such a person may well come to feel that this is not the case, having been given evidence that UK subsidies are at higher levels in Scotland and so on, and convinced that Scotland will not be more prosperous if it becomes independent (I am assuming here, for the sake of argument that there are no disputes over whether the facts are correct here.). He or she may cease to be a Nationalist and feel that its claims are false or dishonest. But, my point is that this is a very different matter from refuting Nationalism, for Nationalism is not just about that. There are other strands, such as the importance of Scottish culture, the advantages of greater democracy and so on which mean that

⁹ This would not quite be true. One difference might be that learning more about Marxism would help elucidate what was meant by 'class struggle', whereas learning more about science would not involve the same elucidation of the concept of causality. This is debatable, thought it cannot be gone into here.

Nationalism itself cannot be killed off by a single thrust. Some people may, for example, argue that it is better to be poor but free, or that economic advancement is meaningless if it is not tied to a love of Scottish institutions, culture and the way of life that goes with it. Within an ideology there may be many factual claims at any given time, but they are couched in such a form that their refutation can be accounted for within the particular ideological framework. Thus nationalisation does not appear to be successful because of the failure to go far enough and current 'monetarist' policies fail because of 'the world recession' or because they have not been properly implemented or whatever.

The kind of dispute that we have here might be illuminated by looking at moral disagreements. Now much ink has been spilt over the question of the relationship between matters of fact and judgements of value. Some philosophers, such as R M Hare¹⁰ have argued that facts and values are logically independent, such that an evaluative conclusion cannot be drawn from a factual premise. Others, such as Phillipa Foot,¹¹ have argued that some factual statements entail a moral conclusion, a conclusion, moreover, that must be the same for all moral agents. Hare's account suggests that there is a 'world' of facts and in the case of moral judgements an evaluative element is added. This is done by the agent concerned deciding to make a principle universal. Particular judgements of value follow from the application of these universal

¹⁰ R M Hare, The Language of Morals, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972)
Freedom and Reason, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1963)

¹¹ P Foot, Moral Beliefs, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1958
Moral Arguments, Mind, 1958.

principles to particular cases. Thus, in Hare's account it is possible to decide to be against lying in the same way that it is possible to decide to be against capital punishment. What this account misses, as Julius Kovesi points out in his book Moral Notions¹² is that moral terms do not evaluate a world of descriptions, they describe a world of evaluations. There is, for example, no purely factual account of lying, such that we would decide to be for or against it. This is not because it has no descriptive content, but because we learn how to use the term 'lying' in the course of learning the term 'wrong'. From the start, lying has a moral importance for us and we learn to pick it out as something that should be avoided and condemn people because they tell lies and so on. As H O Mounce puts it,¹³ to ask "Ought lying to be avoided?" would be like asking "Ought I to avoid what I ought to avoid?" (This should not be confused with the question of whether a particular lie would be justified in exceptional circumstances or not. Such a matter would only be a moral dilemma if lies were already seen as things to be avoided.)

It does not follow from this, however, that the same moral conclusion must be reached by all moral agents who have the facts before them. The same facts can entail different moral conclusions, especially when different moral practices are involved. Thus the statement that X committed suicide will carry a different weight for O'X the Roman Catholic and McX the atheist. For the former, suicide is just one of the ways in which a person can do wrong, for the latter it might have no moral significance at all.

¹² J Kovesi, Moral Notions (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

¹³ D Z Phillips and H O Mounce, Moral Practices (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969). I am indebted to this book for much of the argument in the next three paragraphs. I do not, of course, claim the approval of either author for the use to which I have put their arguments.

If we look at an area of deep disagreement such as abortion, we can see that both sides might agree that the mother's life is in danger or that an extra child might place a great burden on the family resources. For one side, this is enough to justify termination, but for the other killing what is seen as a human life cannot be justified, whatever the circumstances. There is no possibility here of settling the matter by an appeal to some concept such as human good or harm; for it is precisely over what is to count as good or harm that the two sides disagree. What is understood to count as good will be different for various moral practices or traditions, and it is the tradition that orders the way in which the facts are to be understood. Thus the Samurai who commits suicide rather than suffer dishonour and the Catholic who feels suicide to be a grave sin are worlds apart.

It should be emphasised here that there is, of course, room for either side to change their mind, or be convinced by their opponent. My point is that to recognise this, to change one's moral standards or way of life is nothing like recognising that one has made an error in a mathematical calculation or recognising a mistake in a crucial experiment.¹⁴ This may seem to have taken the discussion a long way from disputes between different ideologies. However, having seen the incommensurable nature of different moral positions and the way in which really fundamental moral disagreements may fail to find a solution, we can see that disputes between different ideologies display many similar characteristics. The Liberal and the Marxist may both agree that the days lost through strikes in Britain have increased since the war, but to the Marxist this

¹⁴ The person who tries to excuse a moral failing or an evil action on the grounds "It was a mistake" is surely not meeting the criticism being made. For example, Richard Nixon's defence of his handling of Watergate.

indicates something about the class nature of society, the deepening capitalist recession and the class consciousness of British workers. To the Liberal it might indicate that the balance between the various sections of the community that is essential for harmony in society has been disturbed and must be restored.

As we have already seen, the arguments and conclusions are based upon different premises. Mill for example starts from the notion that the highest value must be placed upon the greatest good of the greatest number and asserts that democracy is the pre-requisite of progress. On the other hand, Sir Henry Maine denied that democracy had brought about what he understood to be progress¹⁵ and rejected the idea that democracy and freedom, so beloved by Mill, were the highest ends of government at all.¹⁶ How can Mill's appeal to freedom and utility refute Maine's appeal to the virtues of nationhood?

To risk being prolix, such disagreements are not like disagreements between two scientists, where one explanation would be replaced by another of the same sort. With ideologist, the correct analogy would be where one of the disputing scientists ceased to see the point of science any more. If, for example, Lenin had become a Nationalist, or Lord Hailsham joined the Socialist Workers' Party, it would not mean that they now had a superior explanation of political activity: rather it would be that in the one case Marxism and in the other, Conservatism, no longer played any part in their lives, or way of thinking about politics.

It is important here to see that the Marxist and Nationalist who argue about the First World War and Burke and Paine are not, strictly speaking,

¹⁵ Any such argument will be circular here since for Mill a progressive society simply is one that is democratic (and vice versa for Maine).

¹⁶ See the earlier quotation from his Popular Government on page 63.

contradicting each other in their respective accounts of events. A series of remarks by Wittgenstein on the Last Judgement helps to bring this out. He compares two people disagreeing over the statements (i) there is a German plane overhead. (ii) there will be a Last Judgement. In the former case, although there is disagreement, the judgements are still fairly close together, in the latter case, disagreement indicates a vast gulf between them. He continues:

Suppose someone is ill and he says: "This is a punishment," and I say, "If I'm ill, I don't think of punishment at all". If you say: "Do you believe the opposite?" - you can call it believing the opposite, but it is entirely different from what we would normally call believing the opposite.

I think differently, in a different way. I say different things to myself. I have different pictures.

It is this way: if someone said "Wittgenstein, you don't take illness as a punishment, so what do you believe?" - I'd say, "I don't have any thoughts of punishment ..."

17

In a similar way the Marxist and the Liberal or Nationalist have pictures before them when they consider the General Strike or World War I. In the way that the believer sees illness as a punishment and the sceptic does not, so the Marxist sees the Great War as an example of 'class struggle' and the Liberal does not. They do not, strictly speaking, contradict each other because they are not describing, or misrepresenting the same event or entity. By this I mean that 'capitalism' and 'the state' are not like cats and sheep that can be more (or less) accurately described by either side. "Capitalism" is

¹⁷ L Wittgenstein, Lectures on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, Ed C Barratt SJ (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1966), 55.

a different thing in Liberalism than in Marxism. The Marxist account of 'capitalism' cannot be divorced from such notions as 'alienation', 'exploitation', 'class' and so on, and since Liberalism has no place for these concepts, it cannot be said to be mis-describing 'capitalism' in the sense understood by Marxists. It has a different understanding of capitalism. When a Marxist says "The Great War was an example of class struggle ..." the Liberal does not want to say "No it wasn't" (cf "There ~~is~~ an elephant in the room" - "No there isn't"), but to talk in a completely different way about balance, reason, the guilt of individuals and so on. To adapt the passage above, when the Marxist says "If you don't see the war as a struggle between classes, what do you believe?" the Liberal says "I don't have any thoughts of classes." In this sense the world of the Marxist and the world of the Liberal are complete, and admit of no intrusion; for everything must demonstrate the class nature of society in Marxism, nothing can do so in Liberalism. Of course, people do change, become converts or cease ideological adherence. But then, as the Tractatus puts it:

It becomes an altogether different world. It must
so to speak, wax and wane as a whole. As if by
accession or loss of meaning.

18

There are two objections that might be brought against my arguments here. Firstly, someone might suggest that although matters of social or historical fact are difficult to settle or resolve, due to ambiguity in the evidence or lack of reliable sources, there is no difficulty in principle. The situation is analogous to two scientists who need more sophisticated instruments or to carry out further experiments before

¹⁸ L Wittgenstein, op cit, 6.43.

deciding in favour of one hypothesis or another. Thus we can decide between the Marxist and the Liberal interpretation of the Great War by reference to objective (if not perfect) standards. It may well be that both are wrong, in which case, so much the worse for them. This call may well be echoed by those who want to argue that falsifiability is an important feature of anything that should be able to command our support. Indeed, the best ideology is the one which is most open to falsifiability, in the same way that the best scientific theories are those which are open to such decisive refutation.

My answer here is that ideologies are not like that. The Marxist interpretation of the Great War does not, in the end, rely on historical facts (though it may contain information that could, in another context be termed historical) such that it can be decisively refuted in the way that, for example, Trevor Roper's view of the origins of the English Civil War has been completely discredited by his rivals. This is equally true of the Liberal version of events, for the failure of 'unalienated man' and 'rational man' to appear under Socialism or Civil Society are not like substances in a test tube or documents that we may appraise for authenticity. I am arguing that not only does the Marxist understanding of, say, 'capitalism' differ from the Liberal understanding of that term, it also differs from the historian's use of that term. The historian is using that term to describe a set of economic relationships that play a part in the attempt to write a plausible account of what took place in the past. In contrast the Marxist use of the term cannot be divorced from its evaluative sense where such notions as alienation, class and exploitation cluster around it. Capitalism cannot be a neutral term in Marxism, since understanding what the term means also involves understanding that it is alienating, exploitative

and so on. History does not confirm or refute either the Marxist or Liberal version of the past, since they belong to different logical areas. It would, of course, be no use in objecting here that historians also 'evaluate' the evidence (when they select which documents to believe and so on), for that kind of evaluation is nothing like the evaluation of capitalism that we find in Marx.

The second objection is that my understanding of what is involved in arguments between scientists, philosophers and historians is naive. For example, T S Kuhn argues¹⁹ that science is not just a matter of two or more parties disputing within a universally accepted framework. He suggests that at any given time there is a paradigm, within which scientists argue, but that ~~given~~ **paradigms** themselves shift over time. Thus the phlogisten theory is unable to accommodate certain other experimental findings. The initial reaction is to try and accommodate both theories within the existing framework but when this cannot be done a new paradigm arises which holds sway until it too changes. because it cannot accommodate conflicting results. Problems do not take place within a universal and unchanging context, but within a frame that constantly changes. This, it might be suggested is similar to my picture of ideological disputes where the criteria are themselves the matter of dispute. Ideological disputes are like scientific disputes at what Kuhn would call a time of 'paradigm shift'. Thus ideology and science are comparable, not because ideologies are scientific or objective, but because science is ideological or subjective. I have, however, in my illustrations of ideological arguments shown that this

¹⁹ T S Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (London, 1970).

is not the case. Though scientists may argue about the framework within which their activity takes place, it has so to speak, a linear progression, such that we may legitimately call the changes in paradigms, changes in science,

They are all still attempting to do the same thing and to develop it in such a way that problems which confront the scientific community are resolved. But this is not the case in disputes between ideologists because Liberalism and Marxism are competitors, not collaborators.

They always run in parallel to one another. Put another way, Liberals and Marxists are not trying to solve the same problems. A change in Marxism would not be the same as a change in another ideology or indeed a change in ideology. After a period of shifting paradigms, the scientific community returns to the business of conducting experiments and postulating hypothesis within the new paradigm, but within the category of ideological thought there are never periods of agreement over the fundamentals of what is at issue. The Marxist and the Liberal always disagree over what counts as the correct understanding of political activity. What may (if we agree with Kuhn) is a temporary state within science is a permanent fixture within ideology.

I have tried to show here that ideologies are not concerned about whether or not certain facts pertain, but with a wider enterprise that might be termed the search for the meaning of the world. This may draw us back once more to parallels with religious or moral codes of conduct. But the meaning they seek cannot be another fact within the world, for then it would be a fact amongst facts, and could, quite simply, have been different. If this is so then it is unlikely that history (where any fact may have been other than it was) will be able to provide the appropriate inspiration, or foundation.

If we accept that disputes can only (intellectually) end where there are appropriate criteria, and that in disputes between ideologists held out no hope of providing such criteria, then it is not surprising to find them continuing down the ages. They do end, of course, for they run out of steam or lose their point, or are rendered redundant by the political victory of one side or the other. Even Burke gave up attacking the revolution after a while. It is this, rather than intellectual agreement that brings them to a halt. As Paine put the matter in The Rights of Man

When the tongue or pen is let loose in a frenzy of passion, it is the man, not the subject, that becomes exhausted.

20

²⁰ Paine, op cit, 61.

CONCLUSION

In his 'Lecture on Ethics',¹ Wittgenstein notes two reactions that we may have when confronted by a work of philosophy. We may say words to the effect "Well, I can see what he wants to say, but how is he going to get there ?" or we may conclude "I can see the individual arguments, but what does it all add up to ?". Having reread this thesis in order to provide a conclusion, these words have a particular pertinence. Indeed, it may be felt that if 280 or so pages have not made the argument reasonably clear, then there is little that is likely to be achieved in another few hundred words. Worse still, conclusions that make attempts to sum up a work often raise as many unresolved questions as the rest of the book does, with no clear link between them and the text they are supposed to be explicating.

I shall, therefore, be brief, and say that this thesis starts with a problem or series of problems about how we, as philosophers, are to understand ideological thought. In this case the subject is how ideologists understand and use the past. In writing about the past, are ideologists merely producing a poor version of history, such that it ought to be condemned for its inadequacy ? or are they engaged in a more complex enterprise in which the past is integrated (or at least related) within a wider context such that it can be more profitably understood as a distinct type of activity ?

The path of this thesis has been to try and clear a space for the philosophical discussion of ideological thought, to show how that thought is to be understood, and then to try and see how the ideological understanding of the past is related to a discipline such as history on one hand, and more practically orientated activities such as religion

¹ L Wittgenstein, A Lecture on Ethics, op cit, 3.

and morality on the other. The conclusion (and given the tentative nature of philosophical conclusions outlined in Chapter 1, this may not be saying much) is that the past in ideological thought is part of an elaboration of what is involved in a particular ideology, rather than a foundation for it. Looking at an ideology and deciding whether we accept it or not is trying to appreciate a picture of the world and the discussion of that ideology involves a further elaboration of what is involved, rather than digging deeper towards a bedrock of certainty. In this ideology is more akin to a moral perspective than to an academic enterprise.

Perhaps the world and politics would be better places without ideologies, but as philosophers, it is surely our task to make what sense we can of them and to locate the part of logical space that they occupy. We can leave the task of combatting them to people.

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